

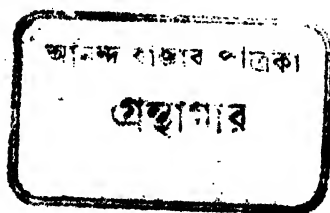






# MOTI LAL GHOSE

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DEDICATED  
TO THE LOVING MEMORY OF MY



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Grandmother  
Nistarini Devi,



Grandfather  
Moti Lal Ghose,



Father  
Nriya Gopal Dutt,



And Little Son Anriya Gopal,  
All of Whom have left the Land of the Living,  
But Whom I hope to meet again.



## PREFACE

I cannot help a little egoism in this foreword. I was born under the roof where Babu Moti Lal Ghose was working on a day (28th October, 1897) exactly 50 years after he was born (28th October, 1847). I lived with him under the same roof upto his death (5th September, 1922), i.e., for 25 years. So, the first 25 years of my life were spent constantly with him. When I look back I find, besides my father, one outstanding figure who predominated over everybody during this period and this was Moti Lal Ghose. My earliest recollection is, perhaps, about Moti Lal Ghose. When as a boy of five I was standing on the roof of our house at Deoghur I saw him coming from Jashidi in a Trolley and stopping in front of our house. That is, perhaps, my earliest recollection of him. Since then, perhaps, not a single day passed when I did not remember him. He was at first my playmate, then a teacher, who taught me music, writing and morals, then a friend, philosopher and guide, and lastly I became his constant companion, an amanuensis, a Private Secretary and an attendant, rolled into one. Indeed, the little that I have learnt has been mostly from my father, the late Nriya Gopal Dutt and my grandfather, Moti Lal Ghose. The former taught me the language and the latter gave me the idea. These two were my *gurus* in the literary world. Moti Lal Ghose had a public life extending over nearly sixty years. The present generation may yet like to know something about a man who was one of the makers of modern Bengal and who made journalism in this land a power and not a mere profession. This is my apology for writing his biography. I wish it were in better hands. Nobody is more conscious of my failings than I am. Knowing them as I do I hesitate to come forward before the public. But the subject, I think, is a sacred one and the public, I hope, will receive it in that light.

SRITA BAZAR, PATRIKA OFFICE,  
Calcutta, 1st January, 1935.

PARAMANANDA DUTT.



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Paramananda Dutt  
1933

*(Frontispiece)*

## CHAPTER I.

## AS A BOY IN THE VILLAGE.

His Parents and Brothers—Early Education—Stories from Early Life—  
The Village He Lived In—Bengal in Olden Days—The Great Burdwan  
Fever—Malarial Havoc.

Sj. Moti Lal Ghose, one of the founders of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, was born in a small village named "Palua Magura" (subsequently named "Amrita Bazar" according to the name of Moti Lal's mother) in the district of Jessore on Thursday, 12th of Kartik, 1254 Bengali era (28th Oct. 1847). His father, Sj. Harinarayan Ghose was in his time a prosperous pleader practising in the District Court of Jessore. Motilal was his fourth son—3 brothers and 2 sisters having been born before him. He was born along with a twin sister who, however, died very early. Motilal's grandfather Padmalochan was a famous Kulin of the time though not in very affluent circumstances. His father however, earned some money and had 'Durgotsav' and other festivities performed every year in his house with due rites. Motilal's mother Amritamoyee was a devout Hindu lady. Though means permitted the family to keep a cook, she did not allow them to keep one and like a true Hindu woman of the time she herself cooked food for the members of the household and looked after their comforts. The sole object of her life seemed to be to make her children happy. But in later life, she began to live a retired life spending almost the whole of her days in divine meditation.

Motilal was a sickly child and had stomach complaints ever since his childhood. So he would often refuse to take any food, but his aunt (mother's sister) who used to look after him, would at such times force him to take food. Chid by his aunt he had to open his mouth for crying aloud and

every time he did so she forced morsels of rice and milk down his throat. This was one cause of his dread of his aunt to which Motilal good-humouredly referred even in his later days. This was perhaps his earliest recollection.

Motilal was very fortunate in his brothers. His eldest brother Basanta Kumar was of exemplary moral character. He it was who was responsible for the early education of his younger brothers and his character and erudition fitted him well for the task. The passion for knowledge was the predominant element in Basanta Kumar's character and he implanted it into the mind of his younger brothers. His second brother Hemanta Kumar who was the eldest of the three brothers who founded the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was highly religious minded even from his boyhood. He read in the Medical College at Calcutta in his youth and later took an important part in conducting the paper. His third brother Shishir Kumar, the second of the brothers who founded the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, is too well-known to require any mention. Motilal had four younger brothers Hiralal, Ramlal, Binodelal, and Golaplal. Of these Hiralal died very early and Golaplal, who was a young boy when the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was started, in his latter days became very famous as its editor. He breathed his last very recently. Basanta Kumar taught Motilal the three R's and also sowed in him the seed of a passion for knowledge which in his after-life made him a serious thinker. In his youthful days, Motilal burnt no midnight oil over big volumes but he went on doing his work as usual and gathered knowledge in the course of studies with which he used to utilise his spare moments.

Motilal was a gentle boy, always afraid lest he should offend his stern and yet loving elder brothers. He finished his early education in the village 'Pathsala'. The chief characteristic of Motilal in his early youth was his submissiveness to his elder brothers whom he always regarded with great veneration. It was this which later on developed into that peculiar trait in Motilal's character—his complete self-abnegation. He did not care for name or fame, he cared for

solid, silent work—work not for himself or even his family, but for his country which he loved more dearly than anything else. In later days, tears would trickle down his cheeks when he talked of the miseries of his countrymen and he did what lay in his power to allay their sufferings. Like the prompter in a theatre he had all along been working from behind the scenes and he never grudged those who performed their parts before the footlight. He was content with his part and he was conscious that he played it well.

From the 'Path sala' Motilal went for his education to the Krishnagar Collegiate School, whence he passed the Entrance examination. Incidentally it may be mentioned here that though keeping an indifferent health, Motilal had been a great walker since his boyhood. In order to go to Krishnagar from his native place he had to encounter great difficulties as there were not good arrangements for conveyance in those days. From his native village to Krishnagar, a distance of 50 miles, Motilal had to walk on foot before and after his vacations. Once during the summer when he felt very thirsty while on his journey, he had to drink foul water from a drain as he could not find any pond or tank near at hand. On another occasion a violent storm came while he was on his way and he took shelter in the shop of a grocer who treated him to a feast of *Chira* and *Dahi*, (fried rice and curd). Even long afterwards Motilal did not forget the hospitality of the grocer and often referred to him in his stories about the good old days.

Another of Motilal's favourite stories—which were numberless and which he would tell daily to the members of his family when taking his dinner—was that of a man with two wives. Motilal was then a little child and he would go to the house of his neighbours. Now, on one occasion as he went to the house of a neighbouring old man with two wives, he found these three quarrelling amongst themselves. The quarrel originated amongst the two wives when the husband was absent and each was invoking the wrath of God upon the other so that she might become a widow. At this time in came the husband, and one of the women, who had a

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broomstick in her hand, began mercilessly beating the husband and admonishing him for marrying her. When the other woman approached the husband, he fell upon her and laid her prostrate on the ground. All this time Motilal, a little child, was standing by, shaking with fear. The woman who fell on the ground now espied Motilal and exclaimed to him, "*Moti, Moti, delo, bonti khana deto, Minsher gala kete jeli*", ("Moti, will you please give me the fish-knife that is lying there, I will chop off the head of this fellow.") This was too much for Moti, who at once fled from the spot and called the neighbours who separated the quarrelling trio.

Motilal's boyhood was mostly spent in his native village "Amrita Bazar" in the Jessore District. It is situated on the river Kapatakshi, about five miles to the north of the Jhinkergacha Railway station. Of course in those days the Railway did not run up to Jhinkergacha and conveyance was not so easy as now. Perhaps that was the reason why the village "Amrita Bazar" like many other villages was then in a flourishing condition. But it was flourishing not in the sense that there were big buildings or a large number of rich men in this village—but it was flourishing in this sense that men there lived a happy and contented life. The sort of life that people lived in the villages has been in more than one place described by Motilal. It pleases our fancy to imagine that while he gave the following description of village life in olden days in his Presidential Address delivered at Krishnagar at the Bengal Provincial Conference in 1915, he had his own village in his mind's eye. Said he:—

"Have you, my young friends, any idea of what Bengal was 60 or 70 years ago? There were then very few towns and Municipalities in the Province. The pick of the nation lived in rural areas. The result was that the bulk of the villages were furnished with all the necessities of civilized life. They had an excellent system of drainage, and each of them possessed at least half a dozen tanks, one or more of which were reserved for drinking purposes, unless the village stood on a flowing river. No people were more cleanly; they rubbed their bodies with mustard oil and bathed at least

once during the day. They lived in well-ventilated houses, facing the south as a rule, and having large compounds. They had their disinfectant in cow-dung. Fields were specially set apart, far from human habitation, for latrine purposes. The people had thus pretty good knowledge of hygienic laws.

"They had abundance of food and had good appetite. There was scarcely a family however poor, who had not one or more milch cows. Rivers, channels, khals, tanks and ponds abounded in fish. There was a pasturage and a village common attached to every populated locality. Fruits were plentiful and so were fresh vegetables. Rice used to sell at an incredibly low price and all kinds of cereals were also very cheap.

"Villages in those days thus teemed with healthy, happy and robust people, who spent their days in manly sports—in wrestling and playing lathis and swords ; in swimming and climbing up tall trees ; in riding and running, not troubled by the bread question or the fear of being visited by any deadly pestilence or any emissaries of the C. I. D. In short, the people could in those days nourish their bodies properly with wholesome food and pure drinking water ; they could keep their villages dry by natural drainage ; they had not to struggle hard for their bread ; they had enough of cattle and unsilted-up waterways to furnish them with such nourishing food as milk and fish. They had also several other advantages which we do not possess now with the result that they were able to enjoy an idyllic life six or seven decades ago, which has passed beyond our wildest dreams to-day."

If we go back 60 or 70 years from the year 1915 when the above speech was delivered we come to the years 1845-55. Motilal was then a mere boy. The speech reflects what Motilal had seen in those days.

Motilal further said :—

"Litigation was unknown among our ancestors. . . . Our people once controlled the yarn industry of the country by the universal use of the *Charka* in every house, rich or poor. Not many generations ago, we made our own metallic utensils and vessels ; we made our *goor* and salt.

"As regards economical living, well, our forefathers with the income of their small holdings not only led an

independent life, but a life of ease and comfort. . . . They held no Government appointments, yet they had competence ; and they were happy and contented because they knew how to lead an economical and healthy life."

About the sanitary condition of Bengal in those days Motilal writes in his "Reminiscences" published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in April 1921 :—

"What was the sanitary condition of Bengal villages sixty or seventy years before (1845-55)? As far as I am aware no official enquiry has ever been held into this subject. The official and urban impression of the present day perhaps is that these villages were then as insanitary as or perhaps more insanitary than they are now. The reverse, however, is the case. This I say partly from my own personal experiences and, partly from official reports. I was born and brought up in a village in the interior of Jessore which was generally known as a fever-stricken district. Yet sixty years ago (before 1860) there was very little of disease in it, and this was the case with most of the villages in Bengal.

"It was in the months of September and October after the usual autumnal rainfall had ceased that the people as a rule were attacked with fever. They fasted or lived on low diet for seven days and were completely free on the eighth, there being no relapse of the fever afterwards. That was the general rule. Those who had enlarged spleens, however, suffered from periodical attacks of fever throughout the winter but they usually shook them off as soon as spring with southern breeze made its appearance. On rare occasions the fever would take a typhoid character and end fatally.

"We had at that time plenty of mosquitoes, but no Malarial fever. Cholera was practically unknown. So were Phthisis and other respiratory diseases except Asthma. The dreaded Small-Pox now and then broke out in a virulent form, but the Tikadars or Small-Pox doctors treated the disease with wonderful success. What a pity that this race of specialists have now become extinct and their treatment is lost to the world! The mortality in those days was necessarily small."

Motilal has shown from official reports, and especially from the Report of the Epidemic Fever Commission that the deterioration of the Bengali race began with the outbreak of a kind of fever in an epidemic form in the sixties of the last

century which is known as the "Epidemic" or "Burdwan" fever and which has now converted itself into Malaria and spread not only in this province but all over India. The Report of this Commission describes how Malaria destroyed many cities and villages like Gour, Gadkhali, Ula, Kanchrapara, Halisahar and Naihati within the ten years from 1860 to 1870.

Motilal had also a personal experience of the havoc created by Malaria during this time. Writes he in his "Reminiscences" alluded to above:—

"As I have already said the great malaria fever first broke out in Bengal in the sixties of the last century. Perhaps it raged most furiously in 1864 in such districts as Hooghly, Burdwan and Nadia. I was at the time prosecuting my studies in the Krishnagar College. The horrible sight that I saw has ever been imprinted indelibly upon my mind. There were no men in the town of Krishnagar to burn or bury the dead bodies. Cart-loads of them were thrown either in the Kharia river or in the bed of the dead river Anjana. Heart-breaking lamentations were heard almost in every house of the town and to add horror to the situation jackals in packs howled during the day after having feasted upon the dead bodies. Our College was closed and I returned to my native village, which was fifty miles distant from Krishnagar walking all the way on foot at a stretch. There was not a village in the District of Nadia I passed through where the disease had not entered and committed dread havocs. Cries of bitter agony assailed my ears when I reached home. I soon came to know the reason of this lamentation in my family—a mischievous fellow had circulated the rumour that I had been carried off by an attack of Malaria."

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## CHAPTER II.

### FROM A SCHOOL MASTER TO A PUBLICIST.

Student at Krishnagar—As a Village School Master—*Amrita Prabahini*—Precursor of *Patrika*—*Amrita Bazar Patrika* started—Early History of the *Patrika*—First Public Appearance—Defamation Case Against *Patrika*.

Fortunately or unfortunately Motilal could not prosecute his studies beyond the First Arts Class. For a time he read in the General Assembly's Institution. He read in the College at Krishnagar also where he had to reside at the College boarding house.

In 1860 the great Brahmo leader Keshab Chunder Sen and some members of the family of Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore went on a missionary expedition to Krishnagar which was at that time a stronghold of Christian missionaries. Keshab Chunder Sen's lectures defending Hinduism, in the sense in which he understood it, created a great impression on the local gentry and served as a check on the surging tide of the Christian propagandists. They gave him a hearty reception and the local Brahmo Samaj began to draw young-men in large numbers. When Motilal joined the Krishnagar College a few years afterwards the enthusiasm for Brahmoism was perhaps at its highest. Being naturally of a religious temperament he was drawn to the Brahmo Samaj which made an indelible impression on his mind. For, though he did not become an out and out declared Brahmo he had in his religious views many things in common with the Brahmoes, and, though not an iconoclast, he could never become an orthodox idolator.

It may be said here that Moti Lal's three elder brothers, Basanta, Hemanta and Shishir had about this time started a high school, a girl's school and a school for adult females in their native village. For this last-named school which was unthinkable in those days they had to suffer great persecution from the orthodox Hindu section of the village people to whom any body who wanted to bring about a social reform was a

Christian. As a matter of fact they had been ostracised. But nothing undaunted, with a band of young and ardent followers they started a *Hari Sabha*, a *Bhratree Sabha* (Society of Brothers) and a *Brahmo Sabha* (not *Samaj*), where religious lectures were delivered and divine services were held. These had also made a lasting impression on Moti Lal's mind, who next to God looked upon his brothers as the ideal to be followed.

Naturally, therefore, while at Krishnagar Moti Lal regularly attended the prayers at the Brahmo Samaj and used to sing religious songs at the time of service. Motilal had a sweet and melodious voice and so his songs were a great attraction for the gentlemen of the place. Also he started along with the late Tarapada Banerjee and others a club for social service, which did much useful work at the time. He did not appear at the F.A. examination. Like all other boys Motilal also did not like his examination, and he has more than once said that examinations sapped the life of the youth of our country and even in his old age he would sometimes be oppressed in his sleep by the nightmare of examinations. He himself did not read much in his younger days and he did not like others also to read much. This may be an eye-opener to those who lay special stress upon University Degrees when considering the success or failure of a man. He did not bear the stamp of the University yet in knowledge and wisdom he was inferior to few of the great scholars of our University.

When Motilal was still a youth, he had to give up his studies, probably due to financial stringency, his father Hari Narayan Ghose having died in the year 1863 when Motilal was only a boy of 16. Instead of appearing at the F.A. examination he took up an appointment as Headmaster of a High English School at Piljong in Khulna district. This was the beginning of his brilliant and eventful career. Those who have read biographies of great men know that not a few of the world's greatest men had begun their career as school-masters and so Motilal's beginning may not be said to be very unfavourable. He was a very successful teacher and the

school-master in him was not dead upto his last days. For he was always fond of giving advice, and many perhaps have benefited by his advice, which was always sound and sober. Though mild and loving, yet something of the autocrat, of the "You-must-obey-my-command" attitude was ever present in the character of Motilal. He was very firm in his convictions,—slow to be convinced but once convinced it was very difficult to make him change his views. He would give a patient hearing before he was convinced, but once convinced he would not like to be argued with any further.

But Moti Lal could not stay at Piljong for a long time. His health had all along been indifferent and it became worse while at Piljong. His elder brothers Hemanta Kumar and Shisir Kumar had been Income Tax Deputy Collectors and his eldest brother Basanta Kumar had started a Bengali paper named *Amrita Prabahini* which was published fortnightly. The *Amrita Prabahini* was the precursor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. Unfortunately, however, the span of life of the *Prabahini* was not very long, and with the early death of Basanta Kumar the paper also ceased to exist.

Sometime after the death of Basanta Kumar, Hemanta Kumar, Shishir Kumar and Moti Lal gave up their respective jobs and started a weekly newspaper in Bengali with the name of *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in March 1868. It was at first published in their native village and Hemanta Kumar, Moti Lal, Ananda Mohan Bose, Barrister, Jagabandhu Bhadra, Teacher, Jessore Zilla School and Moti Lal's brother-in-law Kishori Lal Sarkar, Vakil, High Court, were its writers. The struggle through which the *Patrika* had to pass was very great. Some years before his death Moti Lal himself wrote a sketch of the early history of the *Patrika*, in which he narrated how the three brothers started it as a Bengali weekly with a wooden printing press and a few founts of second-hand types, how they wrote the copy, set the type, prepared the ink, all by themselves, how it fell under the displeasure of the officials, who tried to wreck it, how the Vernacular Press Act was passed, how in one night the paper was transformed from Vernacular



Hemanta Kumar



Shishir Kumar



Moti Lal

**FOUNDERS OF THE AMRITA BAZAR PATRIKA.**

*(To Face Page 10)*



into English, and how from a weekly paper it became a daily. The history of all these is the history of the brothers Hémanta Kumar, Shishir Kumar and Motilal. Much of what might be said of Shishir Kumar with regard to these achievements might equally and appropriately be said of Motilal also. The two brothers, to use a simile once used by Motilal himself, were two flowers in the same stalk, two bodies bearing the same soul.

About the relationship between the two brothers Moti Lal has written in the preface to S. Ananth Nath Basu's Biography of "Mahatma Shishir Kumar Ghose."

How sweet was the relationship between myself and Shejdada (Shishir Kumar) it is impossible to make others understand by words, spoken or written. For sixty years we lived together and discussed political and social affairs. Our bodies were separate but our souls were not. As my little soul was intertwined with the great soul of Shejdada no one had a greater opportunity of understanding him than myself. He was my *guru* and I was his pupil.

Writes Babu Motilal in the sketch of the early history of the *Patrika* alluded to above:—

"An enterprising man living at a place near Calcutta had purchased printing materials to carry on printing business. He failed in his venture and died soon after. His widow thereupon wanted to dispose of them. These materials were purchased and carried to Amrita Bazar, a small village in the district of Jessore. The most valuable of these materials was the Printing Press, a wooden one, called the Balein Press which cost Rs. 32. It was set up with the help of the village carpenter, and the cases with worn-out types were placed on their stands. In this way a printing workshop was established at the village of Amrita Bazar.

"Those who did all these had, however, to learn the business of printing in Calcutta; and when they started the *Patrika*, they had to hold the composing sticks and set their articles in type and also to print the sheets themselves. In short even when a few men of the village had been trained the proprietors themselves had to do the works of compositor, pressman and editor, so long they remained at Amrita Bazar, which was their native village.

“Besides holding the composing sticks and pulling the press for printing the journal they had to cast rollers and types, prepare matrices and manufacture ink. In paper making they failed but they manufactured fine ink. The matrices and types were poor products, though they were utilized in times of urgent need.

“The paper they started was a weekly in the Bengali language. It came out in March, 1868 consisting only of 2½ small (crown) sheets of paper. They named it the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*—*Amrita*, meaning nectar, *Bazar*, market and *Patrika* journal, that is to say, the A. B. P. was a paper which distributed nectar or honey. *Amrita* has, however, another significance, namely, aconite or poison. So the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was a paper which in the opinion of its proprietors purveyed both nectar and poison,—nectar to the right-minded and poison to the wrong-headed people.”

Within a few months of its publication the *Amrita Bazar* came to enjoy a circulation of 500. Its fearless tone and exposure of official abuses, however, offended the local authorities, though it earned a seat for itself in the hearts of the people.

The first public appearance of Motilal was when he was a young man of 21 years. We have said before that before he reached his teens he had been a very gentle and quiet boy. But that does not mean that he was dull or unintelligent. The real fact is that his intellect did not find any opportunity or occasion for expressing itself. In the first year of its existence, to be precise, within four months of its birth, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* found itself involved in a prosecution. A case was brought against the editor and printer of the *Patrika* for criminal defamation by an English Sub-Divisional Officer, Mr. Wright, in consequence of some sharp criticism of his actions published in its columns. Motilal was cited as a prosecution witness. The prosecution wanted to prove through him that Shishir Kumar was the editor of the paper and that a certain other gentleman was the writer of the article in question. In a previous case Motilal had said that his uncle was the proprietor of the press.

The Magistrate asked Motilal—Who is the proprietor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*?

Motilal—It belongs to the public.

Magistrate—How is that? In a previous case you said that it belonged to your uncle and now you say it belongs to the public.

Motilal—I am quite correct. In my previous statement I said that my uncle was the proprietor of the press and not the paper. The press and the paper are not the same thing.

The Magistrate grew angry and said—Who is the editor of the *Patrika*?

Motilal—Well, the paper has been started only recently. It has not yet been settled as to who should be its editor.

Magistrate.—But do not people think that Shishir Kumar is the editor?

Motilal.—Yes, they do, because they think that Shishir Kumar can write very well.

Magistrate.—Do you think that Shishir can write English well?

Motilal.—Yes, very well and better than many fat-salaried civilians.

This was too much for the trying officer. But he in vain tried to elicit from Motilal the story as to who the writer of the article in question was. So that Motilal came out victorious and Monmohon Ghosh, Barrister, who was defending the *Patrika*, shook hands with Motilal and said that the like of Moti was not to be found anywhere. He said that “it is difficult to get this Moti’s (jewel) peer.”

The reader will understand from the above story how shrewd and intelligent Moti Lal was and when necessary he could rise to the occasion.

The case dragged on for eight months and though the brothers came out victorious, their exchequer had been completely swept away. The printer and the writer of the article in question (Raj Krishna Mitter) were convicted and sent to jail, the former for six months and the latter for a year.

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## CHAPTER III.

### A BUDDING SPIRITUALIST.

Moti Lal as a Medium—Spirit of His Brother Appears—A Healing Medium.

The members of Moti Lal's family interested themselves in spiritualism as early as 1866, that is, two years before the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* had been started. It happened in this way. Motilal's father Harinarayan Ghose breathed his last in the year 1863. A little more than two years after this, that is, in 1866 Moti Lal's next brother Hira Lal committed suicide. He was a very sentimental youngman and would often say, "What's the use of my life, if I cannot allay the sufferings of mankind?" He hanged himself to death in a fit of melancholia, which he used to get from time to time. An hour before his death he began to cry and repeatedly asked Motilal as to what would be the lot of mankind and other living beings in this world. Moti Lal tried to console him as best as he could, but all his efforts were of no avail.

His death, following so close upon that of his father, gave a great shock to the bereaved family ; specially Moti Lal and his mother became very much overpowered with grief. Moti Lal's elder brothers had come to learn that certain processes had been discovered in America by which one could talk with the dead and books had also been published detailing these processes. Their mother's grief naturally knew no bounds and in order to console her, they thought of procuring these books. Shishir Kumar came to Calcutta with a view to get them if he could. While in quest of these books he met the late Peary Chand Mitter, the then Secretary of the Calcutta Public Library and learnt from him how to conduct seances.

Said Babu Moti Lal Ghose as President of a meeting in Calcutta held on the 23rd November 1916 in memory of the late Peary Chand Mitter :—

"For some domestic affliction my late lamented  
♦ brother, Shishir Babu, thought of starting for America

to learn the modern art of occultism direct from the spiritualists there. He met Peary Chand Babu in the Calcutta Public Library in order to consult him. Peary Babu gave him some verbal instructions as to how to form circles. He also gave him some books to read and advised him that it was not necessary for any person to go anywhere outside India for the purpose but they could succeed if they practised here in India."

The late Peary Chand Mitter was very much impressed with the conversation of Shishir Kumar and at his instance the latter became a member of the Calcutta Public Library and read the books on spiritualism which were available in those days and learnt how to sit in a seance and conduct it, how to mesmerise others, how to invoke the disembodied souls and many cognate matters. Peary Chand Babu who had been studying the subject from before also gave general instructions to Shishir Kumar so that when he returned to his native village Amrita Bazar he was thoroughly competent to conduct seances.

Immediately on returning home Shishir Kumar began conducting circles. Just at dusk around a round table sat Basanta Kumar, Hemanta Kumar, Shishir Kumar, Moti Lal and their mother and sisters, their fingers touching each others. The room was purified with sacred water, and the main door was closed so that no outsider could enter the room when the seance was being conducted. They prayed to God and sang devotional songs. In the beginning they did not get much response beyond some rapping noise. But gradually they got very good result.\* As to this I take the following from

\* Spiritualism was first brought to this country by ourselves. The first circles held were in our native village. When the accounts of these seances were made known to some of our Calcutta friends, the latter published them in the newspapers (*Indian Daily News*), with the result that an immense sensation was created throughout the length and breadth of the country. The news spread from town to town, from hamlet to hamlet, from house to house that the Amrita Bazar people—Amrita Bazar being our native village—have succeeded in talking with the dead. Thus circles began to be held in every family in this country. *The Hindu Spiritual Magazine* (1908).

'Srijut Mrinal Kanti Ghose's newly-published book in Bengali, *Paroloker Katha* :—

"On the third day at the appointed time they sat in a circle and began to sing the name of God with all their heart. At this time Moti Lal felt as if his whole body was being paralysed and a feeling of some kind was collecting in his mind. Gradually his hands began to quiver a little,—it appeared to him as if some unseen force was gradually over-mastering his body and mind, so much so, that he was gradually losing his power of thinking or doing anything. Then his breath became very deep, his hands began to be thrown aside with force and he was about to lose his consciousness. At last his mental feeling became so intense that he went on weeping in a suppressed way.

"Then Shishir Babu said—'Most probably' some spirit has possessed Moti. For it is to be found in books on spiritualism that when a spirit enters into a medium his condition becomes exactly like this'. Then he asked—'Who are you?'

"From Moti Lal's appearance it seemed as if he was trying to say something. But he could not utter a single word. As a result his mental feelings were augmented. At this others became somewhat unnerved and tried to bring him back to consciousness. Doors and windows were opened at once, showers of water were applied to his face and he was fanned—and at last he came back to his former self.

"When Moti Lal had completely come round he was asked as to how did he feel in his unconscious state. He replied—'At first I felt my body to be under a weight ; but I could not understand why it became so. Gradually I felt that some one had fallen on my neck and was weeping in a painful manner. On hearing him weeping I could not also control myself—but went on weeping. At last it seemed to me that the unseen being was trying to speak, but was unable to do so. At this my mind was very much agitated and I was on the point of losing consciousness.'

Continues Srijut Mrinal Kanti Ghose in his book named above :—

"On the fourth day after the seance had sat for a time Motilal's right hand began to quiver a little. Experience of these few days showed that some spirit

had come down upon him and it seemed he was trying to write something. A pencil was put into his shaking fingers and his hand began to move very quickly and some hieroglyphics were written on the paper. After a time the name of Hiralal was written on the paper rather indistinctly. On seeing Hiralal's name everybody was moved—and they began to cry.

“At this time as Moti Lal's hand began to shake more quickly the pencil fell from his hand and his breath became very quick. He was then wholly unconscious. In that state he encircled his arms round his mother's neck and panted and sobbed, and said, ‘Mother, I am Hiralal,’ and went on weeping.

“All this time Moti Lal's eyes were closed and he was semi-conscious ; in that state when in the exact voice of Hiralal and exactly with Hira Lal's manners he said, ‘Mother, I am Hiralal’, it seemed to everybody that it was Hira Lal who was speaking. ‘Then Hira Lal still exists’—all of them thought and were beside themselves with joy. It is impossible to describe their mental feeling when in that semi-conscious state Moti Lal was drying with his hands the tears of their eyes. As if they had got back their lost treasure, whose existence was not altogether gone and it was he who had come and had been consoling them—this was their impression, the weight of their grief was minimised and they seemed to have got back life and heaved a sigh of relief.”

When the medium had become a bit composed, several questions regarding the next world were put to him and he gave his answers. He described the place as a far better one than this world. He said that he had not as yet come across God or any disembodied soul who had come across Him, and so forth and so on. Moti Lal and his brothers went on sitting in circle. Gradually his elder brother Hemanta Kumar became a medium. His faculty as a medium went on increasing till at last through his mediumship spirits of a very high order made many many valuable revelations regarding the next world, the world where men, women and children go after they have shuffled off their mortal coil and thus the undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller ever returneth was discovered by the earnest efforts of the Ghose brothers of Amrita Bazar.

Shishir Kumar was a great healing medium. Like him

'Moti Lal also had developed great powers as a healing medium. This' fact has been testified to by Shishir Kumar himself, who writes in the *Hindu Spiritual Magazine* :—

"Here is a personal experience of mine, which whenever I think of it, gives me a thrill. I had taken some indigestible food, and that made me sick. I committed another outrage while suffering from acute diarrhoea ; and this time found that I had brought upon myself cholera, the real disease. I felt that I was going to faint away from exhaustion and griping of the stomach. My pulse was then sinking rapidly. My younger brother Moti Lal, who was with me sitting apart, had no idea of the danger which had overtaken me. I called him to my side, told him to sit behind my back, so that I could lean upon him. He did as he was bid. I told him with great difficulty that I had got cholera ; and a strange thing happened immediately after. His hands and limbs began to shake, and he showed by other signs that he was beside himself. It seemed that he had been suddenly overtaken by convulsion. I was so surprised that I could not utter a word, even to ask what the matter was with him. He, however, soon after regained some control over himself, and then he began to make passes on my back with his right hand. I then perceived that he was making mesmeric passes and doing this while in an unconscious state himself. I had practised hypnotism, but he had never done so. I realised then what the matter was. It was this : I was in danger, and a good spirit was trying to nip my disease in the bud by these mesmeric passes. My brother was a good medium ; a good spirit possessed him, so that he became unconscious for the time-being and was in that state while making the passes to cure me. Every pass of his was followed by relief—immense relief. I felt as if by these passes my brother was infusing into me new life, nay, strength and ecstasy. A little before I was going to faint from fatigue and divers sorts of uneasy sensations ; two minutes after I felt strong, happy and disposed to go to sleep. I addressed, not my brother but the spirit, 'Thanks, I am all right', and then fell asleep under an uncontrollable influence, from which I awoke quite refreshed—a new man. I know that God and his angels take care of us."

It will be seen from the above that had Moti Lal been engaged in regularly cultivating his power of mediumship he

might have developed into a wonderful healing medium. But as fate would have it he had to direct his activities through other channels. Hence, though upto his last days he was a strong believer in spiritualism and took great interest in it he could not keep on practising mediumship. The work of conducting the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and attending to numerous public duties was heavy enough not to allow him to practise and develop still further his powers as a spiritualist.

## CHAPTER IV.

### DRIVEN BY MALARIA FROM COUNTRY TO CITY.

Motilal's marriage—an interesting episode—First years of "A. B. Patrika."—Early Helpers—Malaria, Epidemic—Flood Follows Fever—"Amrita Bazar Patrika" Removed to Calcutta.

Motilal and his brothers were a family of musicians. Their father was a musical genius and they had inherited the gift from him. The musical talent developed in an extraordinary manner in Shishir Kumar even when he was a mere boy. Motilal who possessed an extraordinarily melodious voice was his pet pupil and when these two brothers sang together, either secular or religious songs, their elder brothers Basanta Kumar and Hemanta Kumar would fall into ecstasies. Occasionally they performed Jatras and other dramatical or musical performances in their house.

I find in an issue of the *Hindu Spiritual Magazine* :—

"They had their occasional Jatras or dramatic performances, in which their neighbours were made to join. Indeed, the whole village was at that time turned into something like Brindaban with celestial music and dancing. Rai Dinabandhu Mitra Bahadur, author of *Nil Darpan*, was an intimate friend of the brothers and came to see them now and then. He called them the 'happy family' and in one of his dramas introduced characters to illustrate the life of simplicity and love that they led."

But unalloyed happiness is not the rule of the world—it is against the law of nature. Truly has the poet described

Happiness and Misery as twin brothers—wherever the one goes the other stealthily follows and they rule the day by turns. While happiness was reigning supreme in the Ghose family misery shot his arrows to strike the members of that family. Happiness also tried to maintain his ground. First their father died, then died their brother Hiralal—they felt miserable enough, but found great solace through spiritual seances. The brothers who loved each other as dearly as their lives had to separate themselves and take service in different places, but were re-united when the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was started. The defamation case against the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* went on for eight months and completely swept away their small exchequer—but they gained the sympathy of the people, as the latter realised that the Ghose brothers had been the victims of official wrath simply for going to fight the people's cause. Scarcely had the Ghose family recovered from the strain on their persons and purses on account the Defamation Case when came Malaria and almost everybody in the family was down with fever, so much so that they were compelled to leave Amrita Bazar, the land of their birth, practically for good. But of that later.

Some time after the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* had been started, when Motilal was about 22 years old, he was married with Srimati Nistarini Devi, daughter of the late Haran Chandra Sarkar, then Sheristadar of the Dacca District Court, whose native place was at Kumarkhali. There is an interesting episode about the marriage. At the time when negotiations were going on Motilal and his brothers had been swept away by the then current of Brahmoism flowing through the country. As a matter of fact they had formed a *Brahmo Sabha* and a *Bhratri Sabha* in their native village where prayers were held and sermons were delivered in right royal Brahmo style. A sister of Motilal had also been married according to the Brahmo rites in the Brahmo Samaj Hall. Though they had not yet been able to make up their minds as to whether they would sign any declaration confirming themselves to be Brahmoes, they were in close touch with the

then Brahmo leaders and preachers. All this had given rise to the impression in the orthodox Hindu circle in the neighbourhood (and they were perfectly justified in drawing the conclusion) that they had become Brahmoes. In those days of conservatism, to the orthodox Hindu the line of demarcation between a Brahmo and a Christian was very thin. Thus they argued that because the Ghoses had become Brahmoes they had become Christians also, and since they were Christians they were beef-eaters. If confirmation was needed there was no want of eye-witnesses who could swear in the name of all that was holy or dear to them that they had seen a big bull enter the house of the Ghoses in their native village but it was never seen to have come out. So the Ghoses must have eaten it up. Rumours spread like wild fire and this story about the vanishing of the bull (a cock and bull story in the real sense of the term) was no exception. It travelled, in spite of the difficulties of transport in those days, all the way from Jessore to Kumarkhali and from Kumarkhali to Dacca. Negotiations for Motilal's marriage with Nistarini had been concluded and a date had also been fixed for the marriage. In the mean time the story about the bull reached the ears of the female members of Motilal's would-be father-in-law's family. There was bitter anguish in their hearts and by way of precaution they sent Motilal's would-be brother-in-law Babu Asutosh Sarkar (afterwards a District Judge) to the village Amrita Bazar to make a local enquiry into the matter. When he returned to Dacca his relatives enquired of him if he had examined the compound of their would-be bride-groom's house. "Well, did you not find," they asked, "even a single bone of a bull in their garden?" "No, not a single bone," was the reply, and there was laughter and merriment in the house again. The incident formed the subject matter of joke in the two houses and we have personally heard it repeated even after long years have gone by.

The marriage took place at Kumarkhali and the local people said at the time of the marriage that they had not seen



a fairer or more beautiful bridegroom at that place. Indeed, Motilal in his youth was very handsome. He was of medium height and his stature was proportionate. He possessed a fair complexion which was rare in a Bengal village in those days. All these combined with his sweet voice when he sang some *Kirtan* songs made a great impression.

Motilal was fortunate in his wife Nistarini. She was an ideal Hindu lady of the old type. Throughout their lives she had been a noble and affectionate partner and she outlived him by a few years only. The way in which she nursed him whenever he fell ill is possible only in a Hindu lady. Indeed it seemed to be inimitable. As a matter of fact her life appeared to be dedicated to him. So much so that she regarded him not only as her husband but also as her *guru* (spiritual preceptor), for she had taken her *mantra* (religious initiation) from him. Strangely enough she took a great interest in Indian politics and unable to read and write English she was a regular reader of the vernacular papers and magazines, and greatly enjoyed the antics that the late Panchkari Bannerji wrote about her husband in the columns of the vernacular daily, *Nayak*. Motilal had only one child by her, my mother Srimati Sajalnayana, who was born in Dacca in the year 1876 and inherited all the characteristics of her parents.

To return to the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. It has already been said that the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was first published as a Bengali Weekly paper in 1868 from the village *Amrita Bazar* in the District of Jessore. Since then it was published from that place till the Durga Puja holidays of the year 1871, i.e., for about three years and a half the paper was published from the village. After the Puja vacation of that year the paper began to be published from Calcutta.

On the 17th February 1870 the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* launched upon its third year of existence. In issue number one of that year can be found the following editorial remarks in Bengali:—

“By the grace of our kindly God we have just

launched our feet upon the third year of our existence. We offer hundreds upon hundreds of thanks to those noble-hearted gentlemen who have helped us by money or otherwise. . . . We have become comparatively free from troubles now-a-days."

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was at this time printed at the village Amrita Bazar in a Press which was called the "Amrita Prabahini Press." It was published once a week—every Thursday. Each issue contained eight pages. The size of the pages was also much smaller than now—being about the foolscap size. Some of these pages were in Bengali, while others were in English. There was no fixity as to how many pages would be in Bengali and how many in English. Each issue contained both news and editorial remarks; besides, there were some advertisements also. Its annual subscription if paid in advance was five rupees only and if paid at the end of the year it was rupees seven only.

Many men of light and leading of those days were connected with the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. To name a few of them, Babu Kedar Nath Ghose, Pleader of Jhenidah, Babu Tarapada Banerjee, Pleader of Krishnagar, Babu Haralal Roy, Teacher of Hare School of Calcutta, Babu Umes Chandra Ghose, Muktear of Cossipore (24-Perganas), Babu Durga Mohan Das, Vakil of Barisal and Babu Krishna Gopal Roy of Bogra were the agents of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in their respective places of business or residence. Subsequently Babu Devendra Chandra Ghose, Vakil of the High Court of Calcutta, Babu Kishorilal Sarkar, Vakil of the Calcutta High Court, then practising at Krishnagar, Babu Akshoy Chandra Sarkar, Pleader of Berhampore and Babu Dinabandhu Sen, Teacher of the High English School at Gauhati also became agents of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in their respective places of business. Now these were men having some position in their respective circles and their words carried weight. They supplied news to the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, wrote out comments, secured subscribers for it and helped it in times of danger in several ways and thus contributed not a little to its success. All of

them have now gone to eternity and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* can now only pray for their souls.

Besides the persons named above there were thousands upon thousands of others who helped the *Patrika*, most of whose names it is not possible to ascertain and publish. The *Patrika* must remain ever grateful to these unnamed persons.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* reached its fourth year in 1871. It was in that year that the great epidemic of Malaria referred to above broke out at village Amrita Bazar and marred its idyllic serenity. In the Bengali portion of the issue of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of 19th August of that year we find:—

“There is no doubt about it that Jessore is now in the grip of an epidemic of fever the like of which has not been witnessed for long, if ever. Anyone who is attacked is suffering from fever without any break for 4 or 5 days and some times even for 10 or 11 days. And again one who has been down with fever is getting a relapse even after he has been completely cured. In this way some have suffered from fever twice, some thrice and some again have suffered even for a greater number of times. Whenever there is a relapse the fever comes with renewed vigour. The fever is making people thinner and thinner. Up till now there were not many fatal cases. But of late fatal cases have begun to occur. God knows what is in store for Jessore this year. It is not the Bengalis alone who are suffering from fever. Many Sahebs (Anglo-Indians) have also been attacked with fever and some of them have had two or three attacks. Before the epidemic takes a more serious turn, the Government ought to have recourse to such methods that we may get away from this imminent danger. The Government does not take any curative measures unless a disease spreads itself in a very dangerous way. This not only does not benefit us in any way but also causes immense financial loss to the Government for nothing.”

What havoc the epidemic fever created at that time becomes apparent from the following passage extracted from the Bengali portion of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of the 26th August, 1871.

“Milk and *ghee* have become difficult to obtain. Whereas formerly the *Goala* quarters of village Amrita  
• Bazar daily produced about 4 maunds of milk, now we

can get there only 8 or 9 seers. Men here have not seen *ghee* for a good length of time. It is not that things have taken such a turn here in this village only ; we understand many places have fallen into a similar sorrowful plight. In Magura Sub-Division of Jessore District milk used to sell at half or one pice a seer. We have recently been informed that milk is not at all available there now. On enquiry we are told by the *Goalas* that on account of want of fodder cows have become mere skin-and-bone and so they are not giving milk."

In the Bengali portion of the same issue of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (26th August, 1871) we find:—

"There is almost none who has not been attacked with fever and one, who is once down with fever, becomes unable to rally. All cases are now becoming remittent. . . . . If the fever attacks any member of a family, almost all the members of the family are getting contagion. Even not a single member is found free from fever to give water to the patients to quench their thirst."

Misfortune, they say, never comes alone. Village Amrita Bazar was no exception to this rule. To fill up her cup of misery came a great flood which put the whole of Bengal under water for a considerable length of time. Regarding this we find in the Bengali portion of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of the 7th September, 1871:—

"A great deluge has come. Even very old men are saying that they have never seen such floods. . . . . A gentleman from Narail writes, 'We are floating on water ; on whichever side we cast our eyes we find a vast sheet of water like a sandy desert. . . . . We cannot estimate as yet as to how much cattle will be lost.' "

The floods did not spare the village Amrita Bazar. In consequence we find the following amongst the editorial remarks in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (Bengali portion) of 14th September, 1871:—

"We are in the midst of a great trouble. Many of our employees working in the press have fallen ill. This is not a town, where one may for the mere wish get people who can work at the machine. Hence there has been great dislocation in our work. The floods have

added to our trouble. We cannot move about without a boat. This is not a watery country ; so boats are not easily available. So we are facing danger at every step. We can understand that we are not serving our constituents properly ; but we hope that they will realise the situation and excuse us for any irregularity."

It is clear from the above passage that it became very difficult to run the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* from village Amrita Bazar. The town of Jessore was only ten miles away from the village of Amrita Bazar and if the proprietors of the paper so wished they could bring out their paper from the town of Jessore. But then, thanks to fevers and floods, Jessore was in no better way than Amrita Bazar. Hence with great difficulty the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was published from village Amrita Bazar upto the 4th October, 1871. That was the last issue of the paper published from its village of nativity. Thus from March 1868 to October 1871, for a brief span of three years and a half the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was published from Amrita Bazar.

In the issue of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of the 4th October, 1871 (Bengali portion) we find :—

"We take our usual Puja holidays from this number. . . . . The water has again begun to increase. It seems everything is now going to be destroyed."

When the paper was issued on the 4th October, 1871 from Amrita Bazar village, little did its proprietors imagine that that was going to be the last number of the paper issued from that village. They however got some respite and thought out their future plan. They found that it was absolutely impossible to run the paper any more from their native village. So they decided upon going to Calcutta. In the meantime there had been another criminal case against the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and Shishir Kumar had been prosecuted on a charge of concealing evidence as he did not produce the original copy of the article written by the late Raj Krishna Mitter which was the subject matter of the previous criminal case. In this case also Motilal was examined as a witness. This time also he was severely cross-examined and at last even

threatened, but to no effect. The proprietors of the paper thus escaped this time also.

The successive criminal cases caused enormous financial loss to the proprietors of the paper and when they were about to start for Calcutta they found that their coffers were almost empty. In order to pay off their employees and meet sundry liabilities of the press they sold away their press along with all the printing materials to a gentleman who resided at Jessore. After meeting the liabilities they became absolutely short of funds. Hence they borrowed Rupees 100 at a high rate of interest from a money-lender named Bakta-Jamal Biswas. Motilal had made a saving of Rs. 200 from his pay when he was acting as the Headmaster of a High English School at Piljung in Khulna District and was also serving as private tutor to some students there. Uptill now he had kept this money with himself, but now that the whole family was in dire need he had to part with that money and throw it into the common coffer. The Ghose family had thus only Rs. 300 with them and with this paltry sum in their pocket Hemanta Kumar, Shishir Kumar and Motilal set out for Calcutta with about thirty members of their family most of whom were women and children and had been suffering from Malaria to boot.

Towards the end of October 1871 they came to Calcutta, a place then practically unknown to them. They rented a house at 52, Hidaram Banerjee Lane, Bowbazar and put up there with their whole family. They immediately set upon re-starting the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* with indefatigable energy. They again purchased a small hand press for printing and on the 21st December, 1871 they brought out without much flourish or ado the first issue of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* from the city of Calcutta. We find the following editorial observations in the Bengali portion of that issue:—

“Henceforth the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* will be published from Calcutta. We had all along desired to make a gradual improvement of our paper. But we could not make much headway in that direction in the

mofussil. Yet on account of some personal reasons we could not leave village Amrita Bazar. Amrita Bazar is situated on the bank of the river Kapotakshi, whose water is very clear. We used to fish in that river and as there is no fear of crocodiles there we used to swim in that river to our heart's content in the summer and the rainy seasons. At times we got together about a hundred men and went out to hunt hares or porcupines. There we used to pluck fruits from the trees and eat them on the spot, and milked cows to drink their milk. We could not leave these and come to Calcutta, we were pained at the very idea of doing so. If we came to Calcutta on some errand we felt ourselves to be in hell and could find no relief till we had gone back to our native village and breathed its pure air. Oh! what a pity we have now to reside in that Calcutta! Men of Jessore had all along shown us great favour; we pray to them that they may not stop the flow of their favour. What more shall we say, we had to shed tears for leaving Jessore. Krishnagar has become nearer to us now. Hence if Krishnagar was benefited through us it may still be benefited. We take our readers into our confidence and say that though in the past we had suffered much and had spent much money for the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* latterly it had grown into a profitable concern. None removes a profitable concern like this for nothing. We have done so at great financial loss only with a view to improving the paper. One word to those who may think that because we have removed the paper from a village to a city there will be a change in its editorial policy. The *Patrika* is in the hands of the very same men who conducted it before—there has not been the slightest change. But we are in some trouble. Our expenses have multiplied a hundred-fold. If the general public show us a little favour and the people of Calcutta view us with a little kindness, then and then only will the paper run, otherwise the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* is doomed."

lest there should be any misapprehension in the reader's mind that as the passages from the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* quoted above have been quoted in connection with the biography of the late Motilal Ghose they were all written by him, I must tell him at the outset that Hemanta Kumar, Shishir Kumar and Motilal—all three were now writing in the editorial

columns of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and hence it is difficult to determine at this distant date as to which wrote which.

The Ghose brothers were absolutely strangers in the city of Calcutta. The reader can easily imagine what a bold step they took in publishing the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* from the city so soon after coming to Calcutta.

From 21st December, 1871 to 25th March, 1874 the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was published from Hidaram Banerjee Lane, Bowbazar, Calcutta. Afterwards Hemanta Kumar, Shishir Kumar and Motilal removed with their family to No. 2, Ananda Chatterjee Lane, Baghbazar, Calcutta and the first date on which the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was published from that house was the 2nd April, 1874.

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## CHAPTER V.

### A FAMOUS PAPER FROM AN INFAMOUS PLACE.

Early Rise into All-India Fame—No. 2, Ananda Chatterjee Lane.

As I have already stated the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was first published from premises No. 2 Ananda Chatterjee Lane, Baghbazar, Calcutta on the 2nd April, 1874, i.e. six years after it had been started at the village Amrita Bazar. It was the seventh year of the life of the paper. It was still bilingual—a part of it was printed in Bengali for the people of the province of Bengal and the rest was in English for the benefit of readers of other provinces in India, such as Madras, Bombay, the Punjab, etc. From the list of names published from time to time in connection with acknowledgment of subscriptions it is found that the paper was gradually getting an all-India circulation.

How the Government of the day viewed the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* will become apparent from the following curious note



regarding the paper which appeared in the Bengal Administration Report published in the year 1872 :—

“The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* is believed by some to be more extensively read than others. The language of its articles is occasionally rough, but it has the merit of discussing social and agrarian subjects both from the tenant’s as well as from the landlord’s point of view.”

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* came to be appreciated in England also. Towards the beginning of 1872, Babu Girija Sankar Sen, who was then in England wrote to his father in Bengal :—

“Please ask the proprietors of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* to send their paper to the East Indian Association (London). Many people here may subscribe to the paper. I have seen many extracts from the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in London papers.”

In an article on “Representative Government in India” written by Colonel Osborn as early as 1883 is to be found an extract from the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in support of a statement of his to the effect that the officials in India disliked public criticism but liked gagging Acts instead. Colonel Osborn referred to the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* as “the most influential native paper in India.”

About the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*’s early rise into an all-India fame the following observations by Mr. K. Subba Rao of the *Hindu* in his recently published book “Revived Memories” will be interesting.

Speaking about the period from 1876 to 1881 Mr. Subba Rao writes :—

“It was during this period that I was attracted irresistibly to the weekly edition of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* which had established an undying reputation for unsurpassed independence. It was recognised as the staunchest friend of the Indian States and as the most fervent admirer of all that was Indian. Its spirit of fearlessness was often illustrated by the funniest anecdotes then current among students that the two brothers who were editing the paper Babu Shishir Kumar Ghosh and Babu Motilal Ghosh were alternately in jail for sedition or defamation all round the year!”

Referring to the early attainment of an all-India reputation by the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* Mr. Subba Rao writes :—

“The *Hindu*, early in its eventful career, under the able and absolute guidance of S. Subramania Iyer, secured an all-India reputation. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was the first to acquire it and next came the *Hindu*.”

Such early attainment of fame in the life of a journal is very rare. A newspaper or journal must have reputation with the public, for, its very existence, not to speak of gradual improvement, depends on public support. The public must have the impression that the paper is run not for the petty personal interests of its handful of proprietors but for the sake of the good of the general public. The public will support a paper only so long as they will believe that the paper is supporting their cause. In this respect the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was very fortunate. Whoever came in touch with its proprietors became at once convinced of their idealism—it did not take him long to realise that its proprietors were not so keen for making money and living a life of ease and comfort as for serving their country. Their personal wants were few and so whatever the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* brought was spent in improving it. The proprietors were, therefore, not much troubled about the finances of the paper.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* had thus one peculiarity throughout its long career—it was very fortunate so far as its finances were concerned. This is due in a great measure to the fact that its proprietors had always lived an exemplarily simple life. Plain living and high thinking—was the motto which they not only preached but practised also. And they practised it not only in their private lives, but in their business also. They did not require much money for conducting the paper. For long they did not employ outsider writers—Babus Hemanta Kumar Ghose, Shishir Kumar Ghose and Motilal Ghose, they themselves wrote copies, corrected proof-sheets for their paper and looked into the financial side and the management of the business. At first they had to pay only Rs. 40 as rent for their Baghbazar house, though gradually of course

• it rose to an abnormal figure. They had practically no furniture in the beginning. A friend of theirs (Mr. P. Ananda Charlu of Madras) had an establishment in Calcutta and he presented to the Ghose brothers his table and some chairs when he gave up his Calcutta establishment. They also got a long dining table which was disjointed and converted into three smaller tables which can be seen in the *Patrika* office even to-day ; the arms of some of the chairs were broken but they were not repaired. Some *khalias* (charpoys) were requisitioned which served the double purpose of a bed at night and a seat at day time. If the window panes were broken, pieces of paper cut according to measurement were pasted to keep off the sun and the rain and the bitter wintry wind and waste papers were utilised to serve the purpose of carpets. The Ghose brothers were not vain people. They were poor and they knew it ; and they did not want to pass off as rich. Herein lay the secret of the fact that the *Amrita Babar Patrika* had paid its expenses from the very month it was started.

How economical (bordering on being miserly) the Ghose brothers were will become apparent from the condition of their house at 2, Ananda Chatterjee Lane. Amongst their numerous friends who paid visits to them from time to time in this house was the late poet Nabin Chandra Sen, the renowned author of "Palashir Juddha" (Battle of Plassey) and a good many other books of poem. In his famous "Autobiography" written in Bengali he has given a very interesting description of this house. Following is an English rendering of the same :—

"At the northern end of Calcutta, i.e., at Baghbazar they (Shishir Kumar and Motilal) have a big two-storied house with a courtyard inside it. Perhaps the building has not been repaired for a century. In the ground floor and first floor of the outer apartments of this house are strewn about at random here, there and everywhere various unseemly commodities of a printing press. The whole place is dirty, filthy and full of refuses. Not only is the wooden staircase narrow, but it is broken in many places. Neither the rooms nor the staircase had any touch of the broomstick for several years. In a verandah (on the first floor) there is a dirty little camp table, on one side of which on a broken chair is sitting

with his chin sandwiched in between his knees a short-statured man—Motilal Ghose of unmeasurable strength . who strikes terror into the very heart of the British rule. With some ordinary papers and a pencil in hand he is forging political weapons of a superior order. In his person he has a dirty thick red-bordered common *dhoti* and a white dirty shirt without any buttons. Before him, on the other side of the table, is an ordinary bench and on his left there is another old chair—‘an abode of bugs’—one of whose arms had been lost during the battle of Plassey. On the other side of the table is a dirty wall. You will not be able to swear that it had ever been white-washed. By the side of this editorial sanctum is a place for washing one’s face and there you will find a bowl, a napkin and other necessary articles to please your eyes. On the other side of the aforesaid wall there is a big room or ‘hall’. Who can tell the number of years for which dirt, cow-webs, sputum and ink-spots have been adorning the ceiling and the walls of this room? A ‘durrie’ is spread throughout this room over which there is a bed-sheet and on one corner there are two or more small bolsters. These also have been marked with various marks like the walls of the room. They seem to be saying:—

‘*Eman bibidh dage degechhe kapal dhuile na yabe dhoya jiba jatakal*’—(Bengali).

“Our foreheads have been marked with such various kinds of marks that they cannot be washed away, so long as we live.

“Really the bed-sheet and the bolsters can take a solemn oath and say that they have never been indebted to anyone of the washerman class. There is not a single big man in India the dust of whose feet and the smell of whose body cannot be found in this bed-sheet and these bolsters. They are fit to have a place in the Curzon Memorial or Victoria Memorial Hall of Lord Curzon. Such is the condition of the outer apartments of our brothers. I have heard that the condition of their inner apartments is more deplorable. There is a tank behind them. I have heard that the Health Officer of Calcutta has spotted out this tank to be the Khas-Mahal of all the Malaria-carrying mosquitoes of Bengal.”

One may think that in the above description there has been some exaggeration or the poet has drawn upon his imagination. Those who have seen the house in question will

- at once understand that what the poet has said is almost
- sixteen annas true. It may be mentioned here that the tank referred to above has since been filled up.

At the time of the Anti-Partition Agitation when the whole of Bengal was under a deep gloom Mr. Ramsay MacDonald the present Prime Minister of England who was still an ordinary member of the House of Commons paid a visit to India. High offices had not yet metamorphosed him and his heart was still weeping for the poor and distressed. So immediately on his arrival in Calcutta he found out Motilal in his place at Ananda Chatterjee Lane. In this connection Mr. Ramsay MacDonald has left a description of the house in his book, 'Awakening of India.' He has described this house as "an old crumbling place of many rooms where a joint family dwelt in ancient style." Writes Mr. Ramsay MacDonald in the "Awakening of India":—

"I had an interview with one of India's troublesome editors. I sought him in the native part of the city amongst those torrents of beings which bewilder and dumfounder the European. I found him in a place that might have been an Italian palace. There was an ample courtyard, carved screens and balustrades, shady stairs. But decay spoke from every stone. As I entered, the red gleams of the setting sun struck its top and threw its bases into dark shadow. I seemed to have made tryst there with night.

" 'Here' said he whom I had come to see, ushering me into a wide room bare of furniture saving for a table and a chair or two, 'Here we worship. Let us talk of the things of the spirit.' "

From the descriptions of 2, Ananda Chatterjee Lane given above it will be understood how outsiders regarded this house. The greater portion, if not the whole of Motilal's active life was spent in this house. The "Pall Mall Gazette" of London wrote about this house:—

"Motilal Ghose publishes his paper in a huge rambling warren of a house in North Calcutta where he lives with a swarm of relatives and dependents in patriarchal fashion. Babies cling about the editor's bare legs as clad in a scanty piece of linen, he writes torrents of fierce abuse with a most benevolent smile."

Indeed, it was very difficult to think the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* office of those days at No. 2, Ananda Chatterjee Lane to be an office at all. When Motilal was sitting in the verandah in his broken chair day after day writing articles for his paper to read which the whole of India was waiting with anxiety, in the hall beside that verandah at the very same time when he was writing, the members of the family, composed of women and children were singing *Kirtan* songs as loudly as they could. Motilal was writing and if he found that there was some error in the songs or a wrong note was struck he would at once stop writing and enter the hall and teach the tune till those who were singing would be able to sing it properly. It was only then that he would return to his verandah and begin writing again. It often happened that when he was writing, the members of his family were giving a rehearsal of a Jatra or playlet on Lord Krishna in the adjoining hall or little boys of the family were playing at hide and seek under his table or around it, and quarrelling amongst themselves or running about here and there in the verandah. But Moti Lal would remain so much absorbed in his writing that he would not pay the slightest attention to these but would go on writing for hours together at a stretch. In this way when he got tired of sitting he would often stand up and go on writing with the piece of paper in his left hand. Such concentration of mind is rare. Latterly his backbone had become slightly curved on account of his constantly sitting in a bent way for hours together from day to day when he would be writing for his paper.

It has already been narrated that Hemanta Kumar, Shisir Kumar and Moti Lal came to Calcutta from their native village with a very paltry sum in their pocket. How they gradually rose to acquire name and fame is an object of study. It is not difficult for a wealthy man to leave his native village and to settle in Calcutta and prosper in business. There is a proverb in our country that water accumulates only where there is water, which means that wealth has a tendency to go to wealthy persons. It is well-known also how difficult it is for men

devoid of wealth to acquire it. It is difficult to earn and more difficult to make a saving. Whoever will look at the present condition of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* will at once realise that the Ghose brothers had performed a miraculous task. They started with an ordinary wooden printing press worth Rs. 30 and in course of about half a century their press became equipped with numerous modern and up-to-date equipments and all this time they had to maintain a big and growing family consisting of many dependants. I have heard, and I speak subject to correction, that among the newspapers it was the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* which first used a Linotype machine in Calcutta—its proprietors were enterprising no doubt.

One has to think deeply over the gradual rise of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. To my mind it seems there were two reasons for this rise—one was the earnest desire of its proprietors to serve the country and the other was their simple mode of living. Hemanta Kumar, Shishir Kumar and Moti Lal were devout Vaishnavas. They not only worshipped Sri Gauranga, the God incarnate of Navadwip, but also preached and practised his teachings. The fundamental principle of their religious creed was thus the Vaishnava dictum of *jibe daya name ruchi Vaishnava sevan*, i.e., kindness to animals, love for the name of God and the service of Vaishnavas. They did not take Vaishnavas in the narrow sense to mean the worshippers of Vishnu only but they took the term in its wider sense to mean everything created by Vishnu, i.e., not only men, but animals, birds, insects, etc. They thought that the service of these was the main purpose of their life, and to serve the people of the country and to do good to them they founded the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. They did not view politics differently from religion. As a matter of fact, politics to them meant service of the country and so they took up politics as a sacred duty. Many Englishmen either in their individual capacity or as Government officials, came in touch with them and they at once realised their honesty of purpose and hence it is that on many occasions though there were breaches of the law, if viewed strictly, these were winked

at by the powers that be. For, they regarded the proprietors of the paper as honest men who were honestly trying to serve their country.

The other reason for the rise of the paper, as I have said already, was the plain and simple mode of life of its proprietors, who never cared for outward show either in dress, or in food, or in the furniture of their house. There was a remarkable lack of grandeur of any sort. About the furniture of those days I have already spoken. About their dress I may say that it exactly fitted with their surroundings. Shishir Kumar's peculiar dress, *dhoti* and shirt with a hat on his head, has been referred to in many places. Though Moti Lal had no such idiosyncrasies about his dress, yet it was very simple and he seemed to be quite unmindful of what he was wearing. Ordinarily he wore a shirt and *dhoti*; on ceremonial occasions also he wore these, only they were cleaner. He had no use for golden studs, rings or watch and chain. The cloth he wore was also sometimes very short and he had been using these short *dhotis* long before the use of loincloth as a means to cutting down expenses on clothes had been advocated. For long years he slept on a temporarily provided tyled hut on the roof of the house at 2, Ananda Chatterjee Lane, with no other furniture than an ordinary cot and an earthen pitcher and a glass in the room.

One of the characteristics of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in its earlier days was that it took up isolated cases of official vagaries or non-official oppression and went on exposing them in series of articles. A certain official had pulled an employee of his by the ear, a certain official had whipped a passer-by in the public road or a certain white business magnate had kicked a coolie to death, the little sparrow whispered the information to the editors of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and at once they took up their pens in favour of the weak and the oppressed. They did not indulge in vague generalities or high-sounding shibboleths and catch-words of Political Philosophy, neither did they parade their wisdom to an unsophisticated world by discussing subtle economic theories mainly borrowed from the



West. They had intelligence enough to understand the mental capacity of their readers. Education or rather the art of reading had not yet spread to a very considerable extent and expansion of the railways, posts and telegraphs, motor cars, aeroplanes, wireless, etc., also had not brought the different parts of India together. So that the ordinary villager had no interest in the affairs of a distant place, he had not yet developed an all-India craze (which makes even three men in a village in the remotest corner of a country composing a society prefix an All-India before its name) and the fulfilment of his immediate needs was his only desideratum. If he found food and clothing and was not oppressed by the strong, official or non-official, and could take part in the innocent amusements of the village-folk he considered himself extremely fortunate. But there were occasions when he could hardly get even these small mercies. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* pleaded that the villagers might not be deprived of the elementary needs of their life.

Political ideas had not yet developed. India had no politics—of course we cannot say if we have any now. There was, however, what might be called village politics, arising out of caste-prejudices and cognate matters in the brains of idle people who, having nothing for themselves to do would poke their noses into other people's affairs. If, for example, a person of a higher caste took such foods as rice, *dal*, fish-curry, etc., touched by a person of a lower caste, the former would be ostracised, but there was no objection to a higher caste person taking sweetmeats, *kachuri*, *singara* (preparations from flour, ghee, potato, etc.) or *dahi* (curd) from a lower caste person. If a girl in a family was not married within the marriageable age, which was then much lower than now, the girl's parents had to face the odium of society, but if a man lived with women of questionable fame it was taken as a matter of course. It was against such social evils that the editors of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* took up their pen.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* also brought to light instances of differential treatment between Indians and Englishmen in the administration of the day. The conclusions that the editors

of the paper arrived at were reached by the process of what may be called inductive reasoning. They did not start with a general proposition and derive conclusions from it. On the contrary they started with individual cases and established the general rule. For example, their reasoning was never like this: Foreign rule is bad, the present rule is a foreign rule, and therefore the present rule is bad—a method of reasoning which is resorted to very glibly by the armchair politicians who see the villages through their books. Mr. A..... is an English official, he has done an act of oppression, Mr. B....., though an Indian, is serving under the English authorities, he has misbehaved himself with the people who are in his charge and his superiors in office are protecting him, and so forth and so on; and they drew the conclusion or left the readers to form their own conclusions which were irresistible. In this way they taught the people by “putting the finger into their eyes” as the Bengali phrase runs and made them acquainted with the affairs of the day.

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## CHAPTER VI

### EARLY ACQUISITION OF FRIENDS IN CALCUTTA.

Ghose Brothers and Raja Digambar Mitra—Maharaja Sir Jatindra Mohan Tagore—Some other Friends—The Indian League.

One of the most important things to which the proprietors of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* paid their attention on removing to their Baghbazar house in the seventies of the last century was the work of acquisition of friends. People, great and small, began to see the conductors of the paper in their office and they in their turn began to pay return visits. Their sweet and lovable nature, and above all their free and frank talk and childlike simplicity combined with deep insight into things soon captivated those who came in touch with them and acquaintance took no time to ripen into friendship and friendship soon

matured into intimacy. With the gradual increase in the importance of the paper the number of people who visited them increased and their number of friends also went on increasing. Sometimes their visits were highly illuminating. The conductors of the paper were still young and many of the persons who came in touch with them were hoary-headed people carrying years of experience along with them ; they had much to teach the young journalists in course of their conversation. As a matter of fact, all sorts of people with all sorts of information almost every day poured into the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* office and so, in the course of a few years the conductors of the paper acquired encyclopaedic knowledge and information—not by burning midnight oil over page after page of printed matter, but through their conversation with men who were vastly read or who had otherwise made their mark and were competent to teach others. The poet Nabin Chandra Sen in his "Autobiography" has justly remarked that there was not a big man in the country who had not visited the Ghose brothers in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* office.

In this way the proprietors of the *Patrika* acquired innumerable friends and some of them immensely rich too, but they never went to them for pecuniary assistance though they were no doubt helped in other ways by them. Many of them became subscribers of the paper and those who had businesses advertised their businesses in it. An incident may be recalled in this connection. When the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* wrote something in support of a proposal for a memorial to the late Raja Digambar Mitra a Dacca paper which did not look with much good grace on the late Raja Digambar, on account of his serving in the Select Committee on the Road Cess Bill in spite of his strongly opposing the principle of the Bill on its being a direct violation of the Permanent Settlement and on other grounds, wrote that the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was moving for a memorial to the Raja because he had rendered "material assistance" to the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* during its "struggling days," the suggestion being that the Raja had helped the paper with money with a view to stop criticism. The *Patrika* gave a

spirited reply to this in which it disclosed the relationship that existed between Shishir Kumar and Moti Lal on the one hand and the Raja on the other. The *Patrika* said that it was one Ram Gopal Sanyal who was responsible for circulating the canard that the *Patrika* had taken money from the Raja. The friendship between the Raja and Shishir Kumar and Moti Lal grew in this way. After the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* had been removed from village Amrita Bazar to Calcutta, Babus Shishir Kumar and Moti Lal had one day been singing *Dhrupad* songs in a friend's house. Raja Digambar Mitra who happened to be there heard them singing and was very much pleased at Shishir Kumar's skill and Moti Lal's charming voice. They were introduced to the Raja who invited them to his house at Jhamapukur to hear their song. They soon became friends though there was a great disparity in age between the Raja and the Ghose brothers. The Raja became a well-wisher of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and felt deeply that it deserved the support of the country. So he wrote to thirty-eight gentlemen of Calcutta asking them to give the paper a trial. The Raja was very much respected and the subscription of the *Patrika* was then only Rs. 5 per annum. Thus, his request was complied with by thirty-six only two having declined. Of these thirty-six, thirty-five continued to subscribe, but one viz., the late Babu Paran Krishna Mukherjee of Tallah wrote a very angry letter to the Manager of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* for its supporting the Income Tax and discontinued subscribing the paper.

The late Babu Bhola Nath Chunder, the biographer of Raja Digambar Mitra wrote as early as 1893 :—

“His (Raja Digambar's) love for free ventilation of thought disposed him to come to the aid of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. There was the *Hindu Patriot* occupying the field in autocratic supremacy. It professed to be a big gun, but which always fired with blank cartridges. Its milk and water editorials, without salt or sauce, had become extremely insipid to the native community. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* came to the rescue from the tyranny of the *Hindu Patriot*, at about the same time that the Indian Association became ‘a brother near the throne of the Turk’ of the British Indian Association.”

Babu Kristo Das Pal was at that time editing the *Hindu Patriot* and there was a tussle between the *Patriot* and the *Patrika* over the Income Tax question. Raja Digambar being a common friend the conductors of the *Patrika* and Babu Kristo Das Pal met at his house and after a long discussion Babu Kristo Das Pal agreed to write in support of the Income Tax. He did so and a few days later he wrote to the Ghose brothers complaining that by supporting the Income Tax he had lost a dozen subscribers! At that time, as we think even now, it required courage to support the Income Tax—the Tax that hits the rich but absolves the poor. Alas, very few do realise how iniquitous are the indirect taxes, say, on salt or kerosene, when compared with the direct tax on Income! The *Patrika* of those days tried hard to impress this on the public of the day.

Besides Raja Digambar Mitra the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* had another great friend. This was Maharaja Sir Jatindra Mohan Tagore Bahadur, a great personal friend of Babu Motilal Ghose. The two would often meet and hold conversations for hours together on various political and social topics. An incident narrated during one such interview is, I think, worth recounting. I have heard the story many a time from Motilal himself. One day the Maharaja was driving in his old-fashioned carriage and pair accompanied by Motilal when the Maharaja told him about a magician named Hussain Khan who had come to show some tricks to the Maharaja. In course of conversation Hussain Khan begged to have from the Maharaja a beautiful betel-nut case set with jewels which he had seen in the Maharaja's drawing room. The Maharaja said with a smile, "Yes, you will get it if you can bring it here from another room just now by virtue of your black art." "Are you serious? Will you really give it to me if I can bring it here just now?" inquired Hussain Khan. "Yes, I am serious," replied the Maharaja. "Then I am bringing it," said Hussain Khan. Two of the Maharaja's men covered the betel-nut case with a handkerchief and held it tightly in an adjoining room. Hussain with his face turned towards the sky and with folded hands began to cry in an imploring tone, "Hazrat, de diay,"

“Hazrat de diay” (O, Lord, give it to me; O, Lord give it to me).” After he had cried in this way for some time, lo and behold! the betel-nut case was in his hand. True to his word the Maharaja had to part with the valuable betel-nut case.

Another story regarding the Maharaja, which I have heard from Motilal is worth repeating. Now, Motilal in his old age was suffering from Dyspepsia which prevented him from taking delicious dishes. On more than one occasion when a delicious dish was placed before him he would say, “Why, have you given such a dish to me? I cannot take it. My condition is like the late Maharaja Jotindra Mohan Tagore’s.” And he would narrate how on one occasion when a friend of the Maharaja presented some delicious mangoes to him he burst into tears and said that he was then so ill that he could not digest mango; he was living on sago only and the only way in which he could take mango was by dipping a portion of it in the sago-water to give it a smell of the mango.

Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee, Barrister-at-Law, was another of Motilal’s friends to whose place he was often invited to dinner. Needless to say Moti Lal benefited greatly by his association with Mr. Bonnerjee. The two were co-workers in the Congress field and they attended many Congresses together and worked side by side in many public functions. Rajas Sita Nath Roy and Janoki Nath Roy of Bhagyakul who lived in Shovabazar were also his friends. Amongst other old friends of Motilal of whom he often spoke in his latter days mention may be made of Lal Mohan Ghose, Mon Mohan Ghose, Ananda Mohan Bose, Reverend K. M. Banerjee and others, all intellectual stalwarts of their times.

But it is very difficult to give a comprehensive list of the friends and acquaintances of Motilal. I will not even make an attempt to do so; for, it is impossible for me to perform the task. Their number was legion and they consisted not only of men of Bengal, but men of other Provinces also; nay, there were many Englishmen also who associated with Motilal on

intimate terms. There was one peculiarity in Motilal's character, viz., that though he criticised the officials relentlessly in his paper, in his private dealings with them he was very cordial and they also reciprocated with him in this matter. The names of many of these friends, Indian or Englishmen, will be mentioned as and when the narrative advances.

After spending a few years in Calcutta the proprietors of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* found that in order to create public opinion, with a view to carrying out the mission of service to the country, the newspaper alone was not quite sufficient for them. They realised that associations were also necessary throughout the country where men of light and leading might meet and exchange their views. No doubt there was the British Indian Association which had been started in 1851 where men interested in the uplift of the country might meet; but its subscription for membership was so high that it was practically confined to the aristocracy and the big zemindars who only participated in the deliberations or activities of this association. What was needed was an association with branches in various places where men of ordinary means might meet. The Indian League was thus started in the year 1875 to serve as such an association with Babu Sambhu Chandra Mukherjee, who had worked for some time in the *Hindu Patriot* and had conducted some other papers also, as President, Babu Kali Mohan Das, Vakil, Calcutta High Court, as Secretary, and Babu Jogesh Chandra Dutt and Babu Shishir Kumar Ghose as Joint-Secretary and Assistant Secretary respectively.

When Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee started his Indian Association in July 1876 the Indian League had already been in existence for some months. At the inaugural meeting of the Indian Association Babu Kali Churn Banerjee, the foremost Indian Christian leader of his time and a member of the Indian League opposed its formation on the ground that a similar association had already been in existence for some time. Surendra Nath replied to his opposition and staunchly advocated the formation of a new association with the result that the Indian Association was formed inspite of the opposition.

After referring to this incident Surendra Nath writes in his book "A Nation in the Making":—

"The Indian League did useful work. Babu Shishir Kumar Ghose of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Dr. Sambhu Chunder Mukherjee of the *Reis and Rayyet*, and Babu Moti Lal Ghose, were its moving spirit."

The Indian League, however, could not live long. It died a premature death after a short but useful career.

## CHAPTER VII

### FROM BENGALI TO ENGLISH IN ONE NIGHT

Vernacular Press Act—Shishir Kumar And Sir Ashley Eden—Origin of the Act—A. B. Patrika's feat.

How the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was converted in one night from an Anglo-Bengali journal to a wholly English one is a matter for history. In the seventies of the last century the writings in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and a few other vernacular newspapers had exasperated the authorities in Bengal. They had incurred serious displeasure of the Government for their unsparing criticism of Government measures. So, in the year 1878 the Government was determined to control these papers by some new law giving the authorities greater powers than before. Lord Lytton was then the Viceroy and Governor-General and his Government took up the question of controlling the vernacular papers in right earnest. They argued that the vernacular papers wrote for the half-educated and ill-educated village people, who were naturally more inflammable than the educated and intelligent persons who read the newspapers written in English. Hence greater care and caution ought to be taken so far as the vernacular papers were concerned and a special law was required for them—more stringent than the then existing laws which governed newspapers in general.

At this time one fine morning (14th March, 1878) some



official papers in Calcutta were published in which could be seen a notice to the effect that a new Bill would be introduced that very day in the Governor General's Council for the better control of the vernacular press. One of the objects of this Bill was to place newspapers published in the vernacular languages of India under greater control and in order to effect this the Bill sought "to furnish the Government with more effective means than the existing law for the purpose of punishing and repressing seditious writings which were calculated to produce disaffection towards the Government in the minds of the ignorant population." The Bill empowered any District Magistrate or Commissioner of Police in a Presidency town within the local limits of whose jurisdiction any newspaper in oriental language was published, to call upon the Printer and the Publisher to give a bond for such sum as the Government might think fit not to print or publish in their newspaper any words, signs or visible representations likely to excite disaffection to Government established by law in British India or antipathy between any persons of different races, castes, religions, or sects in British India. The Act also empowered the Local Government to forfeit the security and seize the newspapers, plants, etc. There were other provisions also in the Act by which the publication of matters that were considered objectionable by the authorities might be prevented and their printers and publishers might be brought to book. The measure was thus a preventive as well as a punitive one.

It did not take long for the conductors of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* to realise that the Bill was the handiwork of Sir Ashley Eden, the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, between whom and their paper no love was lost. They also understood that it was the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* at which the Bill was mainly aimed. Moti Lal, who was then the right hand man of Shishir Kumar, at once ran to the meeting of the Governor General's Council and was present in the Visitor's Gallery when the Bill was being discussed. To his great disappointment he saw the Bill passed into law in one sitting. The Vernacular Press Act, 1878—for so it was named—was appli-

cable to newspapers published in a vernacular or partly in a vernacular and partly in English. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was then a weekly paper. It appeared partly in Bengali and partly in English and hence it came under the purview of the Vernacular Press Act. But the proprietors of the paper were quite equal to the Government of Sir Ashley Eden—they quietly abandoned the Bengali portion and next week on the 21st March, 1878, the conductors of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* sprang a surprise upon the Government just as the Government had sprung a surprise upon them. They brought out their paper wholly in English, so that the Government looked on agape and the newspaper-reading public of the day laughed a hearty laugh.

In his foreword to the book "A Step in the Steamer" containing the speeches of Lokmanya Tilak, published by Messrs. Tulzaparkar and Patwardhan, Moti Lal thus describes the origin of the Vernacular Press Act:—

"An autocrat of autocrats, Sir Ashley sought to rule Bengal with an iron hand. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was, however, a thorn in his side. He, therefore, conceived the idea of winning over Babu Shishir Kumar partly by kindness and partly by threats. He had managed to make Babu Kristo Das Pal, Editor of the *Hindoo Patriot* his ardent admirer, and his next move was to entrap and muzzle Shishir Kumar Ghose. So, Sir Ashley sent for him one day, gave him a cordial reception when he came, and offered him a 'share of the Government' if he would follow his advice. Here is the purport of what His Honour proposed:—'Let us three, I, you and Kristo Das—govern the province. Kristo Das has agreed to conduct his paper according to my direction. You will have to do the same thing. I shall contribute to your paper as I do to the *Hindoo Patriot*. And when you write an article criticising the Government, you will have to submit the manuscript to me before publication. In return the Government will subscribe to a considerable number of your paper, and I shall consult you as I consult Kristo Das in carrying on the administration of the Province.'

"Babu Shishir Kumar was at the time a poor man. His position in Calcutta society was not high. The tempting offer came from the ruler of the province. Many

another man in his circumstances would have succumbed to his temptation. But he was made of a different stuff. He resisted and did something more. He thanked His Honour for his generous offer, but also quietly remarked, 'Your Honour, there ought to be at least one honest journalist in the land.' The expected result followed. Sir Ashley flew into an unconquerable rage. With scathing sarcasm he told Babu Shishir Kumar that he had forgotten to whom he was speaking, that as supreme authority in the province he could put him in jail any day he liked for seditious writings in his paper, and that he would drive him back to Jessore bag and baggage from where he came in six months. It was not a vain threat. The Vernacular Press Act owed its origin to this incident. It was to take his revenge on Babu Shishir Kumar that Sir Ashley Eden persuaded Lord Lytton to pass this monstrous measure at one sitting. The blow was aimed mainly at the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* which was then an Anglo-Vernacular paper and fell within the scope of the Act. But Babu Shishir Kumar and his brothers were too clever for Sir Ashley. Before the Act was put in force they brought out their paper in wholly English garb and thus circumvented the Act and snapped their fingers at the Lieutenant Governor ; for, a journal conducted in the English language was beyond the jurisdiction of Lord Lytton's Vernacular Press Act. Sir Ashley was a very outspoken man and he did not conceal his chagrin and bitter disappointment at the escape of the *Patrika* from several of his Bengali friends. He told them that if there had been only one week's delay on the part of the proprietors to convert the *Patrika* into English, he would have dealt a deadly blow at it by demanding a heavy bail-bond from them."

We find the following in the issue of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* dated the 21st March, 1878 :—

"It is with deep regret that we part with our Vernacular columns. The step has been forced upon us by our friends and patrons upon whose judgment and patriotism we have confidence. We tried to start the paper in this shape from the beginning of this year ; but for reasons it is needless to mention we could not make all the necessary arrangements till this week. Whether this change will benefit our country or not, Heaven alone knows, but we think an absolutely independent paper, conducted in the English language, is just now a great necessity. We have passed through many trials and we are over-powered with gratitude when we recollect the

sympathy that was extended to us, and we hope, if we deserved it Heaven will move our countrymen to grant it once more."

The reader will observe how cunningly any reference to the Vernacular Press Act being the cause of converting the paper into English has been altogether omitted.

Immediately after the Act had been passed Motilal had occasion to go to Dacca, where at his instance a big public meeting was held protesting against the Vernacular Press Act. Babu Kali Prasanna Ghose, Babu Ananda Chandra Roy and many other leading gentlemen of Dacca were present in this meeting. Protest meetings were held in Calcutta and other places also. In the House of Commons Mr. Gladstone criticised this measure severely. It may be said in passing that action was taken under the Vernacular Press Act against one newspaper only, viz., the *Som Prakash* of Changripota, in the suburbs of Calcutta, then a very influential paper edited by Babu Dwarka Nath Bidyabhushan which had to stop publication for a period. There were no other prosecutions. The measure was repealed during the incumbency of Lord Ripon as Viceroy and Governor General of India.

After the passing of the Vernacular Press Act and when the *Patrika* was being published in a thoroughly English garb Mr. (afterwards Sir) Lethbridge was appointed a Press Commissioner. He was a medium between the Government of India and the Indian Press and his function was to correspond with the latter on public matters and supply them with official news. There was a very small incident between him and the *Patrika* which, I think, may be of some interest to the reader. In those days the Russian Government used to subscribe to a copy of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and having translated, that is mis-translated, its articles, published them in the Russian Press to discredit British rule in India. The Indian Government naturally got annoyed and Mr. Lethbridge brought the matter to the notice of the then conductors of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.

The conductors of the *Patrika* wrote to Mr. Lethbridge in

reply that they were not responsible if the Russian Government were not fair in their translation of the articles of the *Patrika*. They were helpless in this matter. All that they could do was to stop the paper of the Russian Government and they wanted to know if the Government of India wanted them to do so. But then they also said that if such was the intention of the Government they could stop the paper of the Russian Government only on one condition—they should be compensated for the loss of a good subscriber like the Russian Government which always paid their subscriptions to the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in advance. No further communication came from the Press Commissioner and the matter dropped there.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ILBERT BILL AGITATION

An Example of Anglo-Indian Loyalty—Governor-General Insulted—Motilal on Anglo-Indians.

The most outstanding event in the political history of Bengal that took place within a few years after the passing of the Vernacular Press Act of 1878 was the agitation over what was known as the Ilbert Bill. The agitators this time were not the 'natives' of the soil or 'native' papers, but it was the Anglo-Indians and the Anglo-Indian papers that carried on the agitation. The trouble arose in this way. About the year 1882, Government wanted to introduce legislation subjecting 'Europeans' to the jurisdiction of 'native' magistrates in a manner which had not been previously authorised by law. The Bill which purported to effect some changes in the Criminal Procedure Code was published in the official papers along with a statement of Objects and Reasons subscribed by Sir C. P. Ilbert the then Legal Member of the Council and was therefore called after him.

Now, Chapter VII of Act X of 1872 which dealt with the subject of the trial of European British subjects was reproduced in the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1882. So that, in that

year the position in which Indian members of the Government Civil Service found themselves was rather anomalous. For, the jurisdiction to try European British subjects in the mofussil was limited to officers who were themselves European British subjects, the Indian members of the service having no authority to try them. Mr. B. L. Gupta, a member of the Indian Civil Service, drew the attention of the Government of Sir Ashley Eden, the then Lieutenant-Governor, to this matter and subsequently the Bill in question was prepared, introduced in Council and circulated for opinion.

The Anglo-Indians (at that time better known as Europeans) were at once up in arms. They began to shout that if a European, even if he be a criminal, were tried by an Indian, then the prestige of the whole European community would be at stake. A public meeting of the European (Anglo-Indian) community was held in Calcutta(?) in February, 1882 where the Europeans mustered strong and amongst great excitement the following resolution, proposed by Mr. J. J. J. Keswick and seconded by Mr. J. H. A. Branson, Bar-at-Law was passed :—

“That in the opinion of this meeting the Bill for the amendment of the Criminal Procedure Code is unnecessary in the interests of justice ; uncalled for by any administrative difficulty ; based on no sound principle ; founded on no experience ; whilst forfeiting a much-valued and prized and time-honoured privilege of European British subjects, it confers no benefit upon natives ; whilst imperilling the liberties of European British subjects, it in no way affords any additional protection to natives ; it will deter the investment of British capital in the country by giving rise to a feeling of insecurity as to the liberties and safety of the European British subjects employed in the mofussil and also of their wives and daughters ; and it has already stirred up on both sides a feeling of race antagonism and jealousy, such as has never been aroused since the Mutiny of 1857.”

For a whole year the Anglo-Indians went on agitating against the Bill and in the cold weather of 1883-84, the matter went so far that Lord Ripon, who was then Viceroy and Governor-General, was personally insulted by some members of

this community at the gate of the Government House in Calcutta while returning from outside. A gathering of Anglo-Indian tea-planters assembled and hooted at him at a railway station while he was returning to Calcutta from Darjeeling. As a matter of fact a number of Anglo-Indians had formed a conspiracy according to which they bound themselves, if the Government adhered to their proposed legislation, to over-power the sentries at the Government House, put the Viceroy on board a steamer at Chandpal Ghat, and send him to England *via* the Cape of Good Hope. The existence of the conspiracy was known to some officials including the Lieutenant Governor. A *concordat* was, however, subsequently arrived at between the Supreme Government and the representatives of the Anglo-Indian community. The battle was virtually won by the latter. For in the words of Sir John Strachey :—

“The controversy ended with the virtual though not avowed abandonment of the measure proposed by the Government. Act III of 1884 extended rather than diminished the privileges of European British subjects charged with offences, and left their position as exceptional as before.”

The Ilbert Bill agitation and subsequent developments were commented upon in a series of articles in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. Even long after this affair Motilal often referred good-humouredly to the Ilbert Bill agitation when the question of the loyalty of the Anglo-Indian community in India was raised. The Ilbert Bill agitation was one of the many perennial subjects with which Moti Lal often confronted the Anglo-Indian community in India. The subject of St. Andrew's Day Dinner was another to which I may refer afterwards. The materialism of the West was another of the subjects with which he embellished his banters against the Europeans. The Europeans, he wrote, were prospering in every way, but it was an undeniable fact that they had pulled down God from His throne and had set up Mammon in His place. They went to the church not for religion but for display. They were far advanced in scientific discoveries, but these instead of being conducive to the good of humanity were rather destructive of the peace and harmony of mankind and

were utilised by the strong and the powerful in order to keep the weak and the oppressed under subjugation.

There were many other matters in which Moti Lal twitted the Anglo-Indians of India in his inimitable way. For example, he often referred to the hard and struggling life that they had to live in this country, especially in the months of April, May and June when the heat in this country was intense. He twitted them on their tenaciously sticking to their thick and coarse coat and trousers even in this grilling weather ; and advised them to live in India like Indians, by dressing themselves in the *dhoti* and *chaddar* and taking the plain and simple Indian diet. Instead of jam, jelly and pork and ham he advised them to take *dal*, *bhat* (rice) and sweets like *rasagolla* and *sandesh*, which latter he would call a celestial food. He could not admire the wisdom of the Europeans who left their congenial shores in the prime of their lives and spent the best part of their days amidst what appeared to them to be most uncongenial and unhealthy surroundings and under most trying conditions, amassing enormous wealth, only to return home and die rich. He opined that if the Englishmen were well advised they ought not to have come to this country at all.

There was a vein of humour permeating almost all his writings concerning the Anglo-Indians and perhaps that is why he was very much liked by individual Anglo-Indians, official or non-official though he criticised them *en masse*. Indeed, when one finds column after column of what has been called in some quarters as "vitriolic vituperation against the European community" in the writings of Moti Lal one is not a little surprised to find that he had a large number of friends among the European community in this country, both official and non-official. The reason for this seems to be that though he was an unsparing critic of the activities of the European community in this country, individual Europeans, who came in touch with him, were convinced that neither did he bear any malice or grudge against them nor had he any personal axe to grind.

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## CHAPTER IX

### EVIDENCE BEFORE ROYAL COMMISSION

Some Dirty Disclosures—Vagaries of the Postal Department—Post Office, a family preserve—European Etiquette.

A Royal Commission on Public Services in India was appointed in 1887 to enquire into the conditions of the services and suggest ways and means for their improvement. Babu Moti Lal Ghose gave his evidence before the Committee on the 30th March of that year. It brought him at once into prominence before the public eye. Moti Lal selected the Post Office for exposing the thorough ostracism of the Indians from that department. When all special departments of the Government had been taken possession of by the Anglo-Indians there was left for the people only one—the Postal Department. There was ample reason for doing so. It was found after repeated experiments that the Postal Department could not be organised and its work carried on satisfactorily without the help of the natives of the soil. The history is interesting.

Though the Dak system existed in this country before the advent of the British rule, it was not so well-organised. A system of Dak on an organised scale was introduced in India for the first time on the 1st December 1855. A low and uniform rate of postage was put in force and the whole of the then existing system was re-organised and considered under the Postal Act of that year. The pre-payment of letters by means of stamps in lieu of cash was introduced, as well as a double charge on unpaid letters. A Director General of Post Office was found necessary and one Mr. Riddel was appointed to the post.

At first Mr. Riddel appointed a large number of Europeans to help him, but he soon discovered his mistake. He found that these European subordinates were of no use to him, and

he had to dispense with their services. He appointed Indians in their place and in course of a few years the system was completed. That the children of the soil possessed a vast power of organisation was clearly demonstrated. Without the help of such men as Babus Saligram, Dinabandhu, and Suryya Narain and a host of others the postal system in the country could perhaps have never been brought to a state of high efficiency. Under the circumstances it was but fit and proper that Indians should reign supreme in this Department. As a matter of fact the Government of the day had recognised it. So the Indian Postal Act laid down the following:—

“No person other than a native of India can be appointed to any office in the Post Office Department. A ‘native of India’ was defined as any person born or domiciled within the dominions of Her Majesty in India or within the territories of Indian Princes tributary to or in alliance with, Her Majesty, of parents habitually resident in India and not established there for temporary purposes only.”

But in course of time this rule was flagrantly violated. When Moti Lal appeared before the Sub-Committee of the Public Services Commission he pointed out this rule and showed how it was being honoured more in the breach than in the observance. For instance, the Director General of the Post Office was not only not a “native” of this country, but was a Civilian. So was the Deputy Director General. The Post Masters General of all the Provinces with perhaps a solitary exception were European Civilians. The first Assistant to the Director General, the Comptroller of Post Offices, the second and third Assistants to the Director General, the Presidency Post Masters and their Deputies and the Deputy Post Masters General were all “natives” no doubt,—though not of India but of England. In Bengal out of 15 Superintendents eight were Europeans. In the Railway Mail Service out of 14 officers getting Rs. 150 and upwards per month, 10 were Europeans. In Behar Circle, of the five Superintendents four were Europeans. The children of the soil were thus completely ostracised from the higher appointments in the service in the

face of the distinct provision on the subject, though nobody had the hardihood to deny their thorough fitness for these posts.

Moti Lal showed by incontrovertible facts and figures that not only was the Post Office a family preserve of the heads of the departments but that jobberies of every kind were practised in it. In short the departments had been filled by the sons, sons-in-law, brothers and cousins of some of the chief officers, all Europeans, though they had no right to be there as they were not "natives of India." This exposure created such a scandal that the matter formed the subject of an interpellation in Parliament by Mr. Bradlaugh with the result that Mr. Hogg, the then head of the Post Office, was compelled to resign. The evidence of Babu Moti Lal did not go in vain. It secured for the children of the soil many of the high offices in the Postal department from which they had been shut out and which had been the monopoly of European interlopers.

Though to all intents and purposes Moti Lal had been assisting his illustrious elder brother, Shishir Kumar, in discharging his editorial duties of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* since its very inception at their native village, it was perhaps for the first time during the session of the Public Services Commission in 1887, i.e., nearly twenty years after the paper had been started that he appeared before the officials as the Joint-Editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.

An incident happened while Moti Lal was giving his evidence before the Committee which though a trifling one is worth mentioning because his detractors and more especially persons who were hit by his evidence wanted to make great capital out of it. The Committee consisted of Justice Sir Charles Turner, the Hon'ble Maulavi Abdul Jubbar, Mr. Kisch (Post Master General) and others. The incident is as follows. After Moti Lal had been examined for sometime before the Committee he happened to eructate and this was the cause of the incident. But let me describe it in the language of Moti Lal himself. Writes Moti Lal giving a summary of his evidence in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* :—

"At this time, an incident occurred to which I

would have never alluded if it had not been made a capital of by the *Indian Daily News* reporter. I happened to eructate. Of course I was not aware that it was a dreadful sin in the eyes of Englishmen to yield to this natural action of the stomach. But the following remark from Sir Charles Turner roused me. 'You did it once,' said Sir Charles, 'but I passed it over. Well, you must know, this is against English manners.' I, of course, could not understand him, and I whispered into Hon'ble Maulavi Abdul Jubbar's ears to know what was it. He explained the thing to me, and it was with difficulty that I could repress a smile. I, however, said that I could not but do what I had done and begged to be excused. Justice Turner then began to lecture me on the rules of etiquette, and, I heard him with meekness. I must admit, however, that his manner of reproving me was very gentle, and coming from a man of his position and age, I took it in an excellent spirit."

This incident occurred in the midst of his examination and after the examination was over Moti Lal parted company with Sir Charles Turner "who rose to see him off and expressed a wish that he would come again and give evidence, specially on the Education Department."

The *Indian Daily News* report to which reference was made by Motilal had however given a garbled version and a gentleman wrote the following letter criticising that report to the Editor of the *Indian Daily News* which was published in its issue of 4th April, 1887:—

"Sir,—I regret to see your reporter has dwelt much upon an irrelevant matter in reporting the evidence of Babu Motilal Ghose, Joint-Editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. He reports that Babu Motilal was rebuked by Sir Charles Turner as he twice eructated before him. Sir Charles, no doubt, made some remarks on the subject, but that was done with a patriarchal feeling and with great courtesy and gentleness. Indeed, the attitude of Sir Charles was courteous throughout and he rose when Babu Motilal took leave. The reporter also might have mentioned that Sir Charles asked Babu Motilal to come again and give evidence on the subject of education. But why so much fuss about such a trifling matter? If Babu Motilal had gone to Maharajah Jotindra Mohan Tagore, the first citizen in

Calcutta, and had committed this breach of English manners, and if the Maharajah had remarked it, he would have simply said, 'You seem tired; shall I provide you with some refreshment?' What if a Hindoo gentleman does not know English manners? What if an English gentleman does not know Hindoo manners? It would be absurd on the part of a Hindoo to laugh at a European guest if he is found to eat with forks and spoons, as it would be absurd on the part of a European to laugh at his Hindoo guest if the latter is found to eat with his hands. I notice this fact at all because the prominence given in your columns about the eructation business will injure the reputation of such a good man as Sir Charles Turner more than that of Babu Motilal. It is quite true, however, that Babu Motilal's evidence has made ugly and damaging disclosures about the jobberies committed in the Postal Department."

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## CHAPTER X

### MORE ABOUT EVIDENCE BEFORE ROYAL COMMISSION

Commotion in Postal Department—Anglo-Indian Manners—Press Comments on the Evidence.

The evidence of Babu Motilal Ghose before the Royal Commission on Public Services in which he disclosed the vagaries of the Postal Department created a great commotion in the Postal Department. Searching enquiries were at once started by interested persons to find out the parties who had supplied him with the damaging facts and Mr. Hogg, Director-General of Post Offices, telegraphed to the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* Office asking for copies of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* containing the summary of his evidence.

In the meantime Babu Motilal Ghose received an anonymous letter. The hand-writing, however, was of a European or Eurasian. The following is the copy of the letter:—

"Motilal Ghose.—The *bosh* you were good enough

to communicate before the Public Service Commission the other day gives to all readers very fair idea of what you black-guard natives (Bengalees) are and what the likes of you are capable of saying and doing. It is a wonder that the European gentlemen present there did not apply the toes of their boots to your back side, as they should have done to you for your display of Bengali manners and customs. Surely you must have eaten poor beef that morning for your breakfast to make you belch forth and expel impure gas, which during this warm weather must have reached the boiling point in connection with the steam from boiled rice, and found its way out of your black mouth, instead of its proper channel—your backside. You Bengalees are the most degraded race on this earth, and you should read Macaulay. It is the English Government only that tolerates you, sons of—; but now you and the likes of you must go to Upper Burmah, where the Burmese will put you through in a very short time. You have done more to damage your cause than all the Bengali forgers, thieves, and rogues that we read of in the daily papers, almost every day.”

The above letter was adorned by a marginal couplet which omitting certain words was as follows:—

*Tumara joroo ke—*

*Tumara gooshti ke—*

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* published the above letter along with the marginal couplet and commented on it as follows:—

“We have very little doubt that the above is the production of a European or a Eurasian postal officer.

- If it be so, the couplet properly belongs to his patron who gave him his appointment, and we therefore make a free gift of it to him.”

In fairness to the Anglo-Indian (then known as European) community be it said here that a gentleman of this community (whose name I have not been able to ascertain) wrote a letter to Motilal with reference to the eructation incident in a very sympathetic manner which showed that there was at least one Englishman who could feel for a Hindoo. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* also had the fairness to publish an extract from this letter with approval. Following is the extract:—

- “I have often thought that one cause of frequent misunderstanding between the two races is a want of

knowledge of the social customs and ceremonies, modes of address, etc. on the part of each. Nay, I have sometimes thought of compiling a short account of these with the help of some native friends. What may seem rude on either part may arise simply from not understanding the spirit of an action or expression. For instance, one of the best intentioned Europeans in Calcutta once told me in great distress, that a native gentleman had taken great offence at his mode of addressing him. I asked him what he had said. He replied, 'I spoke to him as I should to you or any other gentleman. I addressed him as *you* just as I do to you now.' I told him that he should have used the honorific '*Ap*'. He was astonished and said he did not know, but certainly he would have been the last man in the world to intentionally give offence. Such instances in speech and action are doubtless common, and each race probably forbears to seek communication with the other lest there should be some step in speech or action not in accordance with received custom. If the spirit of social intercourse were explained with reasons for the modes adopted, I have a strong impression that communication would take place with more ease and confidence and less of embarrassment in the sense of doing wrong."

Commenting on the evidence of Babu Motilal the *Behar Herald* remarked :

"Of the branches of Public Service for which the people are eminently fitted the Postal Department is one about which there can hardly be two opinions. But their exclusion from the higher grades of it was all but complete. This fact was brought into prominent relief in the evidence of Babu Motilal Ghose, Joint-Editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* before the Sub-Committee of the Public Service Commission. This testimony must have caused a strange flutter in the dovecots of the department, as it was full of so many ugly disclosures that Sir Charles Turner hesitated to accept it without a thorough cross-examination. Mr. Kisch, the present Post Master General who happened to be present was asked, however, to contradict the witness, if he could, but he did not venture to do so."

Motilal's evidence before the Public Service Commission was followed by a series of articles in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* exposing the jobberies of the Post Office. Numerous

instances were quoted and irrefutable facts and figures were given, so that all attempts of the Postal authorities to shield their action proved fruitless. Space does not permit me to repeat the whole thing. So I take one point at random. There was a rule in the Post Office Manual to this effect :—

“It is essential that a Superintendent should have a thorough practical knowledge of every detail of Post Office work and be competent to instruct his subordinates. It is important also that he should know the prevailing vernacular language of the circle in which he is employed.”

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* quoted this rule and went on :—

“Let us now mention the names of some of the Superintendents who were appointed direct from outside, and the ages in which they were appointed :—

NAMES.	AGE WHEN APPOINTED. YEARS.			
L. A. Massa	...	...	...	19
H. C. Ronsack	...	...	...	19
E. A. Doran	...	...	...	19
A. J. Faichnie	...	...	...	18
G. W. Schoeneman	...	...	...	18
M. C. Byrne	...	...	...	19
A. R. Ammon	...	...	...	19
A. Bean	...	...	...	18
H. C. Sheridan	...	...	...	17
N. G. Wait	...	...	...	19
C. C. Sheridan	...	...	...	18
E. R. Kellner	...	...	...	20
T. Corbett	...	...	...	19
W. A. Kelly	...	...	...	20
J. C. Koddy	...	...	...	18"

The *Patrika* further commented :—

“It is hard to conceive how these young people—some of them could be styled lads—could have qualified themselves for the duties of a Superintendent, unless we accept the supposition that they came out of their mothers’ womb like our *Astabakra*, fully competent to teach the world and to do anything and everything. *Astabakra* remained twelve years in his mother’s womb and learnt everything while there from what his father



taught to his disciples. Perhaps these young lads acquired all the necessary qualifications of a Superintendent while flying their kites near the Post Office buildings!"

Mr. Hynes, First Assistant to the Director-General of Post Office gave evidence before the Committee of the Public Services Commission and tried to meet or refute some of the statements of Babu Motilal Ghose, but he hopelessly failed to achieve his end.

*The Indian Patriot* thus commented on the statement of Mr. Hynes:—

"The carefully worded replies of Mr. G. J. Hynes, First Assistant to the Director-General of Post Office to the statements of Babu Motilal Ghose, Joint-Editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* before the Public Service Commission at Calcutta must prove disappointing reading to everyone outside the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian community and even to many in that community. . . ."

The *Shom Prakash*, which was in its time regarded as a leading paper in the country, wrote:—

"When the Public Service Commission held its sitting at Calcutta, the 'patriots' fell fast asleep and it was only Baboo Motilal Ghose, the Joint-Editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* that satisfied the members of the Commission, citing innumerable instances he came to know of, after a good deal of search, that the natives of the country are gradually losing their privilege to enter Government offices."

Motilal's evidence before the Public Services Commission was the subject matter of discussion in the Press for several months together and brought him very prominently before the public eye.

It took a year for the Public Service Commissioners to prepare their Report. As regards the Postal Department the Commission made the following recommendations:—

"Postal Department:—That in order to enable Natives to compete on equal terms with Europeans and Eurasians for appointments which require higher educational qualifications and greater physical energy than are necessary for efficient service in the lower posts, a certain number of appointments from Rs. 80 to Rs. 100 a month should be filled by competition, the successful

candidates being admitted on probation and being trained in Head Offices, after which they should be employed as Inspectors, and if found qualified selected for the grades of Superintendent.

“That of the seven highest appointments in the Departments at present filled by Covenanted Civilians, not less than three should be ordinarily filled by promotion within the Department.”

It, therefore, appears that Motilal's evidence did not go in vain. It succeeded in introducing the competitive system of recruitment for certain posts and succeeded in snatching away at least three out of the seven highest appointments from foreigners to the children of the soil and set the ball of Indianisation rolling.

## CHAPTER XI.

### EARLY CONGRESS ACTIVITIES.

Norton's Reminiscences—Fourth All-India Congress—Simultaneous I. C. S. Examinations in England and India—Fifth Congress—Legislative Reforms.

The name of Mr. Eardley Norton, Barrister-at-Law is well-known in this country. He practised at the Madras High Court for a time and later joined the Calcutta High Court where for a considerable time he ruled the day. He was counsel on behalf of the prosecution in the famous Maniktala Bomb Case in which Sriyuts Aurobinda Ghose, Barindra Kumar Ghose and others were prosecuted and Mr. C. R. Das took the defence side. Long after this case in another famous trial—the trial of Sj. Nirmalkanto Roy, who was charged with murdering a Police Officer in a street in Calcutta—Mr. Norton was on the defence side and succeeded in saving the young man from the jaws of the gallows.

Mr. Norton in his younger days took some interest in Indian politics. He attended some sessions of the Indian National Congress and took an active part in them.

We find in Mr. Norton's *Reminiscences* published in the (now-defunct) *Looker-on* of March 8, 1919 that Babu Motilal Ghose was one of those who attended the fourth session of the All-India National Congress held at Allahabad in 1888 under the presidentship of Mr. George Yule, President of the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce. Amongst those present were Messrs. W. C. Bonnerjee, Telang, Monmohan Ghose, Pheroze Shah Mehta, Ranade, Surendra Nath Banerjee and others. "Moti Lal Ghose," says Mr. Norton, "was wrapped in an ancient *chudder*" and when Rajah Sewprasad of Benares moved a hostile resolution he "declined to call him *bhai* (brother)".

Says Mr. Norton :—

"Next morning was to inaugurate the Resolution on simultaneous examinations in England and in India for candidates for the Civil Service. Dear old Moti Lal Ghose had given notice of his intention to divide the Congress on the Resolution. He objected to successful Indian candidates being sent to England for a two years' training. His orthodoxy was up in arms. England, he said, spelt whisky and women for tender Indian youths. He objected to a nautch-girl in India on principle, but to the fair-haired Amaryllys clothed in black silk 'undies', rouge and wanton smiles he was determined to offer an opposition relentless and interminable. Let the Heavens fall, let the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* be mistaken for the *Pioneer*, no decent Indian woman's brother should be exposed to the wiles of Club No. I, and the denizens of Pimlico or St. John's Wood. So he blew his bugle and the clans mustered. It was up with the banners of Moti Lal Ghose, and though the sages of the Congress pleaded with Moti to fall into line with their more liberal views he said nothing but sat like a Sphinx, mute as the Fates, inexorable as death. We sent him to bed at three and attacked him again at six. He was harder and colder than ever. There was no fire in his tent and he had frozen to an iceberg ; and so he won his point. A compromise was arrived at, and Monmohan Ghose was elected to move it at the full meeting. Caine, the 'general ruffian' of the House of Commons, was there as a visitor, and he told me afterwards how deeply impressed he was with the manner in which it was adopted. In a letter to a London newspaper he described the incident and its determination as 'worthy of the Front Bench at Home'."

The following comment on the fourth All-India National Congress held at Allahabad in December 1888 was published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. As Moti Lal personally attended the Congress and was also editing the paper at this time we may presume this to be from his pen or at least written at his instance :

“Many earnest people who had gone as delegates to the Congress at Allahabad had to leave the place disappointed. They had many things to say and to do, but they had no opportunity of doing any good to the Congress except swelling the number of delegates. The complaint is just, but it is common to all large gatherings. It is certain, however, that this year a large amount of anxious thought was bestowed upon the proceedings to be followed than it was done at Madras last year.”

In the Allahabad session Mr. John Adam of Madras moved an amendment which wellnigh threatened a split in the Congress camp. His amendment was to the effect that simultaneous examinations should be accompanied with compulsory residence of the India-passed candidates in England. It was nearly half-past five when Mr. Adam moved his amendment and so the discussion was reserved for the next days' meeting.

It was only a very few of the delegates who were seated on or near the platform who heard Mr. Adam's amendment or paid any serious attention to it. Moti Lal who was one of these gentlemen at once saw the grave consequences that would follow if the amendment were passed or accepted by the Congress. He said that if the amendment were carried, considering the state of the Hindu society at that time the Congress would be at once characterised as a non-Hindu organisation by its opponents and then the whole Hindu nation, which was then much more orthodox than now, would disavow the Congress, for they would not be able to subscribe to the resolution for sending their children to England for education or for fitting them to hold employments in their own country. Such men, for example, as the Maharajah of Durbhanga, the premier land-holder of the Province of Bengal or Maharaja

Jatindra Mohan Tagore, the premier citizen of Calcutta, he feared, would at once cut off their connection with the Congress if the amendment were successfully carried. So he considered the amendment to be greatly injurious to the cause of the country. Immediately after the meeting he saw Mr. Hume (the father of the Indian National Congress) and Mr. Norton and spoke to them on the subject. He explained to Hume the danger involved in the amendment. Hume realised the danger, became anxious and asked him to secure votes against the amendment. It was then nearly half past nine in the evening and Moti Lal then went to Norton who on hearing about the danger involved in the amendment not only assured him that he would oppose the amendment but promised to go out next morning to canvass for votes against the amendment. Moti Lal then saw Captain Banon, who had influence with the Punjab delegates. The Captain also assured him that the Punjab votes would go against the amendment.

Early next morning Norton was seen going but and securing votes. He forgot his morning tea, he forgot his breakfast and was busily engaged in canvassing votes. Moti Lal also induced other leaders to inform the delegates of the danger that awaited them and the alarm spread like wild fire from tent to tent. So before the day's meeting began it was apparent to everybody that Mr. Adam's amendment would be lost. Ultimately a compromise resolution was passed which on the one hand appreciated the concessions proposed by the Public Services Commission, but on the other hand stated that full justice would never be done to the people of this country until open competitions for the Indian Civil Service were held simultaneously in England and India.

The fifth All-India Congress was held at Bombay in December 1889 under the presidentship of Sir William Wedderburn. The most outstanding figure in this session of the Congress was Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, M.P., who had been surnamed the "Member for India". When Moti Lal who was attending the Congress as a delegate from Bengal met Bradlaugh, the latter while referring to the warm reception

that was accorded to him remarked with a smile, "I was well-nigh killed by your people, the crowd was so great."

The most important question before this session of the Congress was the Bill for the reform of the Legislative Councils. Bradlaugh had drafted a Bill on the subject. Before the question was finally taken up for settlement in the open Congress it had been referred to a select body of delegates to devise, if possible, a uniform scheme which would apply to all parts of India. This body sat for two days and threshed out a scheme with the help of Bradlaugh which was ultimately adopted by the Congress with some minor alterations.

Now, three schemes were placed before this select body of delegates. One of these was known as the Bengal or *Amrita Bazar Patrika* scheme. It had appeared in the columns of *Amrita Bazar Patrika* some time before and was placed by Moti Lal before the Congress. Bradlaugh remarked that of the three schemes this was the best. In fact, he said that it was the scheme which he liked most. But he was sure that as it was based on direct representation the whole body of the Conservatives in Parliament would object to it and give it no chance of success. A scheme from Madras, fathered by Norton, based upon indirect representation was finally adopted. The other scheme which was not accepted had originated in Bombay.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### HOW CHARLES BRADLAUGH WAS DRAWN INTO INDIAN POLITICS.

Some English friends—Caine, Bradlaugh and Digby—Kashmir Affairs—Interview with Bradlaugh—Taking up Kashmir Cause—Questions in Parliament.

Though Moti Lal was a severe critic of the British administration in India he bore no ill-will against Britishers in general or any individual Britisher. And it was partly

owing to this fact, if not also to his frankness of speech and suavity of manners, that he could count among his personal friends many an Englishman of power and position. One of these was the late W. S. Caine, Member of Parliament. Very early he formed the acquaintance of Caine who had come to India to preach against intoxicants, and acquaintance soon ripened into friendship. Caine who possessed a very liberal heart was moved by the pathetic appeals that Moti Lal made to him to induce him to enter the field of Indian politics with a view to agitate the grievances of India in Parliament. And it was at Moti Lal's instance that Caine became the London correspondent of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and raised several Indian questions in Parliament in the eighties and nineties of the last century.

In the year 1889 the late Charles Bradlaugh M.P. came to India. He was putting up at Bombay when the fifth session of the Indian National Congress was going on. Motilal had also gone to Bombay as a delegate to the 'Congress from Bengal. He met Bradlaugh and with his persistent appeals moved him to take up the cause of India. Bradlaugh at first refused to intercede on behalf of India on the ground that he was not aware of facts and figures regarding India. But Motilal assured him that there would be no difficulty in this matter as Bradlaugh could get all information regarding India from Mr. William Digby, who was collecting materials for his book "Prosperous British India," and who was a great personal friend of Motilal. In this book, Digby, though an Englishman himself, showed from facts and figures quoted from official records what English rule had done in India, he proved to the hilt the poverty of the Indian people, their heavy taxation, the terrible and ceaseless drain from India to England and the responsibility of England for famines in India. Motilal and Digby often met each other and they must have held long discussions on these matters.

At this time Maharaja Pratap Singh of Kashmir had lost his *guddee* owing to the machinations of some mischievous persons. A series of articles were published in the *Amrita*

*Bazar Patrika* feelingly describing the wrong that had been done to the Maharaja. A letter of his describing the affair was also published which created a great sensation in official circles. When Bradlaugh agreed to take up the Indian cause Motilal cited the dethronement of the Maharaja as a case in point and wanted Bradlaugh to take up the question to Parliament for redressing the grievance. Pandit Gopinath of Lahore and two other representatives from the Maharaja of Kashmir had come to the Congress at Bombay. At the instance of Motilal these three representatives saw Bradlaugh with a memorial on behalf of the Maharaja and Bradlaugh promised to take up the cause of the Maharaja. At first he refused to raise in Parliament the question of the Magistrate and the Political Agent being off their heads, but Motilal insisted on the matter being raised and Bradlaugh had to agree.

Here is a summary of the very interesting interview, that took place between Motilal and Bradlaugh, taken from the former's private diary:—

When I proposed to Mr. Bradlaugh to take up the case of the Maharajah of Kashmere, he seemed to be very much annoyed. His reply was, 'I have already disposed of two gentlemen who saw me with the same mission. One of them was a Pleader and the other an Engineer of the State who had the boldness to offer me some silver vessels as presents. I am sorry you too want to drag me into this business. Well, I have resolved not to meddle with it.'

I—Why, may I inquire?

Mr. B.—I have been advised by Mr. Hume not to meddle with this matter as the people might then charge me with having taken money from the Maharaja.

I—But are you really going to be bribed?

Mr. B.—Of course not.

I—Has not Mr. Bradlaugh this reputation that he never cares for what the world says about him so long as he is satisfied that the case he advocates is a just one?

Mr. B.—Well!

I—You know you are not going to be bribed, and if I can convince you that the Maharaja has suffered gross wrongs at the hands of the Government, why



should you not protect him? Is it because he had the misfortune of being born a Prince?

Mr. Bradlaugh was non-plussed.

He however sought to wriggle out of his position by declaring that he was willing to defend the Maharaja provided he appealed to him openly.

I pointed out that that was an impossible condition. For, in that case the Government would make his life simply unbearable.

Mr. Bradlaugh replied that Parliament was superior to the Indian Government, and the latter would not dare to oppress a man when he was under Parliamentary protection.

I told him what he said was theoretically correct, but as a matter of fact, living six thousand miles away, it was impossible for a Member of Parliament to give the Maharaja any shelter if he fell under the displeasure of an irresponsible and bureaucratic Government.

Mr. Bradlaugh reflected for a moment and then said in a resolute tone:—My decision is made. I will not take up the matter if the Maharaja does not place his papers directly in my hands. No more on this subject, Mr. Ghose.

It was now my turn to be non-plussed

A happy idea, however, flashed in my mind. I asked Mr. Bradlaugh if he would not admit that the subjects of Kashmir were as much interested as, or even more interested than, the Maharaja himself in the preservation of the integrity of the State. Suppose, these subjects were to approach him for help, how could he refuse it? If they were to tell him that granting the Maharaja's alleged misgovernment was true, why should they, innocent men, be punished by the annexation of their State for his fault? What answer would he give to them?

Mr. Bradlaugh was again non-plussed!

He said that in that case it was his duty to serve them. He then grew warm and with a tremendous thud on the table with his gigantic hand, he assured me he would do his very best, that he would raise a debate in the House, that he would expose the whole scandal to the world, but our facts and figures must be absolutely correct and his briefs must be prepared by Mr. Digby in whom he had absolute confidence, to all of which I readily agreed.

The sequel is interesting. Three gentlemen had come from Kashmir to Bombay as delegates to the Congress. Motilal told them the purport of his conversation with Bradlaugh and enquired if they were prepared to wait in deputation on him and appeal to him for his help. They were quite ready to do it. They then presented a formal address to Bradlaugh praying for his protection and he gave them in public an assurance of his support to their cause. One of these gentlemen was Pandit Gopinath of Lahore.

Bradlaugh fulfilled his promise to the very letter. Digby prepared a brief for him based on the articles in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and the official papers relating to the subject. On the 3rd July 1890 Bradlaugh gave notice of a debate in Parliament on the Kashmir affairs in these words:—

“I beg to ask leave to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the taking away by the Government of India from the Maharaja of Kashmir the government of his State and part of the revenue while refusing to allow any judicial or Parliamentary enquiry into the grounds for such action against a great Feudatory Prince.”

Considerably over forty members having risen in their places, Bradlaugh made a powerful speech of considerable length in which he proved conclusively the wrongs that had been done to the Maharaja. The motion, of course, was defeated, the Government having a large standing majority, but it did its work. The Maharaja was restored to the *guddee* though many of his powers were taken away. Some of these powers, however, were restored as late as 1921.

In course of the above conversation Moti Lal made another request to Bradlaugh to which also he at first declined to accede. It was that he should be pleased to ask questions in Parliament about the high-handed proceedings of the members of the Indian Civil Service and the Political Agents attached to the Courts of the Indian Princes. Bradlaugh not only came round to the views of Motilal when the latter described the doings of some of the Magistrates and Political

Agents but grew warm and declared with a strong thump on the table that he too had some personal experience of the high-handedness of some of the Magistrates in England and that he quite sympathised with the position of the Indians. As a matter of fact his interpellations on the conduct of some of the Magistrates in Bengal, such as Mr. H. A. D. Phillips, Mr. Beams and others created a good deal of terror among the members of the Indian Civil Service.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

#### FROM A WEEKLY TO A DAILY.

Age of Consent Bill—Hari Maiti's Case—Popular Feeling—Against the Bill—Protest Meetings—Necessity of a Daily Paper—*Patrika* Converted From A Weekly To A Daily.

While the sixth Indian National Congress was sitting in Calcutta at the end of December, 1890, the rumour spread from mouth to mouth that Lord Cross, the then Secretary of State for India, had directed the Government of India to introduce in the Supreme Council a Bill to raise the Age of Consent from ten to twelve years. The whole country was indignant. The general body of Hindus, who were then much more orthodox than now, took it to be an affront to their religious and social custom. The system of early marriage was ingrained in them and they thought that by raising the age of consent the marriage of girls would naturally be deferred and vices of European society would gradually creep into the Indian homes. Moreover they argued that if any reform in their society was needed it should be carried out by themselves and not thrust upon them by a foreign body.

Now, the Age of Consent Bill originated in this way. One Hari Maiti had intercourse with his girl wife and the wife died of bleeding. It was proved by medical evidence that Hari Maiti had previous intercourses with his wife who was a well-developed girl. It was also proved that it was of her

own accord that she came to her husband on the day she died of bleeding. Though it was a case of accident pure and simple Hari Maiti was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment.

There are in every age and in every clime classes of persons who always think that a reform is needed. If they cannot bring about a reform of the strong and the obdurate they will exert their energies to achieve this end with the weak and the yielding. At the time when the above incident occurred the Congress and politically-minded people of India were trying to bring about an enlargement of the existing legislative Councils on a representative basis. But another class of "Reformers" thought that the Government was a hard nut to crack. So they directed all their energies towards reforming the society of the country. They made much capital out of Hari Maiti's case. The Government took up the cue. Thus the Age of Consent Bill was introduced by the Government and it fell among the Indian people like the apple of discord and created disunion among their rank and file.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* at once took up the gauntlet. It warned the people that if they paid all their attention to this Bill they might forget other important matters; for example, "they were likely to forget the danger that was hanging over their head in the shape of the Police Reform," which proposed to increase the number of European Magistrates and give greater powers to the District Police Superintendents. But cool calculation was of no avail. The popular passions had been roused. Even men like Maharaja Jatindra Mohan Tagore, Raja Rajendra Lala, Sir Romesh Chandra Mitter, Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee and other leading members of the Hindu society arrayed themselves against the Age of Consent Bill, and in spite of its earlier warnings to the people the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* itself was subsequently carried away by the tide of popular opinion and began violently to oppose this piece of social reform. As early as January 1891, when the Age of Consent Bill had been formally introduced the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* suggested that "a public meeting must be held at once in Calcutta to consider the Age of Consent Bill before the

next meeting of the Legislative Council . . . and a memorial must be submitted by the public of Calcutta on or before the day of the debate."

Gradually, the feeling against the Bill became very intense in the country and especially in Calcutta. It became the subject matter of talk everywhere in the town. Hawkers began to sell pamphlets in the streets for one or two pice criticising and caricaturing the Bill. Some of these bore inscriptions like "Great Danger to Hindu Religion," "*Dohai* Maharānec—our religion in Danger" and so forth and so on. Meetings were held here and there and everywhere in the town. The British Indian Association under the Presidentship of Raja Rajendra Narayan Deb Bahadur and Secretaryship of Maharaj-Kumar Benoy Krishna Dev of Shovabazar, took up the matter in right earnest. Raja Peary Mohan Mukherjee of Uttarpara who presided over a meeting of an association named Sabitri Sabha gave expression to his opinion that the action of the Government was improper. Maharaja Jātindra Mohan Tagore of Pathuriaghata said that the introduction of the Bill was a great blunder. The Hon'ble Sir Romesh Chandra Mitter opposed the Bill in the Legislative Council. The columns of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* were filled up with opinions of men opposing the Bill and week after week its leading editorials were directed against the measure.

On the 22nd January, 1891 a public meeting was held at the residence of the late Maharaja Kamal Krishna Dev Bahadur at Shovabazar (Calcutta) to protest against the Bill. The attendance was not only very large, but hundreds of people had to go away disappointed owing to want of room. The spacious quadrangle of the Rajbari was crowded to suffocation. Not only Hindus, but several Mussulmans were also present in the meeting. Telegrams sympathising with the object of the meeting which were read out showed that they came from persons like Maharani Swarnamoyi, Maharaja Jagadindra Nath Roy Bahadur of Natore, Maharaja Girijanath Roy Bahadur of Dinajpur, Raja Suryya Kanta Acharyya Bahadur of Muktagacha, Raja Haronath Roy Chaudhury Bahadur of

Dubalhati, Raja Gyanada Kanta Roy of Jessore, Maulavi Mahammad Nazimuddin Khan Bahadur of Madras, Mahamahopadhyaya Ram Dikhit Apte of Poona, the Maharaja of Durbhanga and others. Mahamahopadhyaya Bhuban Mohan Bidyaratna, a renowned Pandit, was proposed to the chair by Maharajkumar Nil Krishna Dev Bahadur and Syed Abdul Sobhan, a Mahomedan gentleman, one of the biggest Zemindars of Bogra seconded him. So, here was a matter in which leading Hindus and Mahomedans were of the same opinion and thus they combined in their protest against the proposed measure.

Babu Kalinath Mitra moved the first resolution which ran as follows :—

That this meeting, while thanking the Government for its benevolent intentions, deprecates all social reforms by the Legislature as at present constituted, and is of opinion that under present circumstances, any reform, affecting our society, to be useful and permanent must come from within, and not be forced by the present system of Legislation.

He opposed the Government measure in a vehement speech. When he said that the Government were introducing this measure on the opinion of a few Babus who had been to England and returned to their mother country with new-fangled ideas, Moti Lal interposed and said that he was, however, glad to say that Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee was opposed to this measure.

Babu (afterwards Raja) Sitanath Roy moved the second resolution opposing penal legislation in a matter affecting religious ceremony. A Standing Committee was formed at the meeting with a view to carry on agitation against the Bill and in a few days' time the Committee submitted a long memorial to His Excellency the Viceroy (Lord Lansdowne) giving point by point the objections against the proposed legislation supported by the opinions of a large number of medical practitioners of Calcutta and signed by 10,000 persons.

Very soon after this a public meeting was held at the Calcutta maidan to protest against the Bill where a lakh of

men assembled. No one presided and 12 different speakers addressed the meeting simultaneously standing apart from one another in different places of the maidan.

It was at this time that Indians had to witness the peculiar spectacle of the daily papers boycotting the public. Some papers of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta refused to publish letters from eminent persons opposing the Government measure. At this critical moment the *Hindu Patriot* regretted the want of a Hindu daily paper to safeguard the religion of the Hindus. The *Indian Mirror* supported the Bill and it was characterised by the Hindu public as a Brahmo paper. The result was that great pressure was put on the conductors of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* to convert their paper from a weekly to a daily one.

19th February, 1891, ought to be a red-letter day in the history of journalism in India. I do not know whether according to the Hindu calendar that was an auspicious day or not, but later events seem to testify that certainly that was an auspicious day, at least, for journalism in India. It was on the 19th February, 1891, that the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* made its appearance for the first time as a daily. I have already said that at that time the Government and the country had gone mad over the Age of Consent Bill. When this madness had assumed its greatest height the people of Bengal found that they had no suitable daily organ to take up their cause and agitate over the matter. They were not satisfied with the pleadings of the *Patrika* once a week and they insisted on the proprietors of the paper to convert it into a daily.

But the proprietors were not very well off at this time and great pressure was brought to bear upon them to take this hazardous step. Various deputations from the people and from friends and admirers now began to wait upon them and they threatened to make their life miserable if they did not change their paper into a daily. At last they had to agree and though they had not much printing materials with them they took a leap into the dark. The country now knows very well if they had been rewarded for this bold step.

From this time Moti Lal had to labour hard—very hard.

The difference between the labour of conducting a weekly paper and that of conducting a daily paper is very great, and the difference grew all the greater as the change was a sudden one. Moti Lal and his brothers who not only owned the paper but had also its management in their hands had now to undergo great financial difficulties, but they tided over all obstacles by dint of their innate sense of economy and unique capacity for adapting themselves to surrounding circumstances.

Within a week of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika's* conversion into a daily "a densely crowded and representative meeting" of the leading members of the Hindu community was held at the residence of Babu Ramanath Ghose in Pathuriaghata, Calcutta, to protest against the Age of Consent Bill. Almost all the elite of the city and many distinguished Pandits from Nava-dwip, Bhatpara, Bikrampur and Orissa were present in that meeting. Raja Rajendra Narayan Deb Bahadur presided. In the report of the meeting published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (Daily Edition) of the 21st February, 1891 we find that Moti Lal attended the meeting as Editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. A Committee was formed in that meeting to draw a memorial to Lord Landsdowne, the then Viceroy and Moti Lal was one of the members of that Committee. Let it be said here that in spite of the agitation in the country the Age of Consent Bill was passed, and people know what good or bad it has done either to the Government or to the country. Since then the Sarda Act, called after Rai Harbilas Sarda Bahadur has further increased the Age of Consent. The Heavens have not fallen down, nor has the Ganges been on fire. The fact is that the Age of Consent affecting the age of marriage has ceased to be a social or religious matter, if ever it was such ; it has now become a purely economic question.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### AN ELECTION AFFRAY.

Moti Lal, A Candidate For Election To Calcutta Corporation—Supported by the Press—How Friends Were Parted—Election Tactics—Moti Lal's Defeat.

In the year 1892 Moti Lal was attacked with a serious disease which often attacks public men,—he fell a prey to the importunities of friends and thus got election fever. He stood as a candidate for election as a Commissioner of the Calcutta Corporation. In this connection he issued the following appeal to his constituency:—

#### "APPEAL

*Amrita Bazar Patrika Office,*  
January 13th, 1892.

To

The Electors of Ward No. I.

Dear Sir,

I beg to offer myself as a candidate for one of the Commissionerships in Ward No. I, at the forthcoming General Election of Commissioners. I venture to hope that you will kindly approve of my candidature.

Yours faithfully,  
MOTILAL GHOSE,  
Editor, 'A. B. Patrika'."

While announcing his candidature the *Statesman* wrote:—

"We observe that our old friend Mr. Motilal Ghose, the Editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* has been induced to offer himself as a candidate for one of the vacancies in Ward No. I at the forthcoming General Election of Commissioners. The city is in need of a few more men of the sterling honesty and sturdy independence of Moti Lal Ghose to manage its affairs at the Municipal Board, and it is to be trusted his candidature will prove successful."

In this connection the now-defunct *National Paper* said:—

"The announcement of the new election has provoked both worthies and unworthies to stand for elec-

tion. We are glad to learn that the Editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* has been induced by the rate-payers of Ward No I to stand for the election. The promoter of the Municipal Elective system ought to have a place on the Board."

The *Bengalee* in supporting Moti Lal's candidature wrote :—

"The electors of Ward No. I would be well-advised in returning Babu Motilal Ghose as Commissioner for their Ward. Babu Motilal Ghose is an experienced journalist, a man of letters and of great public spirit. He would be an acquisition to the Municipal Board."

The *Guardian* had the following :—

"A notable candidate in these days of flunkeyism and *apkawastism* among most of the Commissioners on the Municipal Board, it is refreshing to see the name of Babu Motilal Ghose offering himself as a candidate at the forthcoming general election. In sturdy independence of character, unflinching tenacity of purpose, ready grasp at intricate subjects and the last though not the least, in genuine patriotism, he has few equals in India. If such a man stands for any Ward, it is simply doing honour to such a constituency. We congratulate the rate-payers of Ward No. I to have persuaded Moti Babu to stand as a candidate for the same."

In the beginning there were eight candidates from Ward No. I for two seats. But Moti Lal's rivals in the election were really two, and they were formidable candidates, Rai Pasupati Nath Bose and Babu Bhupendra Nath Basu. The former belonged to a well-known aristocratic family, he was a big zemindar, having a palatial house in Calcutta, perhaps the largest in the northern quarter of the town and he had a large number of friends and relations in the Ward in which he lived for generations and which he sought to represent at the Corporation. Bhupendra Nath Basu was then a rising Attorney. His later career is too well-known to require any mention. Needless to say both these candidates were personal friends of Moti Lal. At first the candidates took the election fight with a good grace. But gradually high feelings were aroused and supporters of rival parties began to call each other all sorts

of names and tried to belittle the heroes of their rivals in various ways.

The following extract from a description of the situation as given in a leading editorial of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of some date in February, 1892 will be interesting:—

“We read in books that something like madness seizes the people at the period when an election takes place in a country. At such times they lose their proper senses and not only throw stones at each other but dead cats, rats and dogs. Though it is only a Municipal election, yet the people in Calcutta seem to be in a state of frenzy.

\* \* \* \*

Ward No. I is not only the first according to the Municipal division of the town but first also in its frenzy which, as we said above, usually seizes the people during the period of election in all countries. . . . Ward No. 1 is a Kayastha quarter of the town. Of these Kayasthas it has been alleged that Maharaja Yama (Pluto) himself, the Lord of Death and the Giver of punishment and reward, could not carry on his avocations until he had appointed Chitra Gupta, the Kayastha for his Prime Minister. So there must be something extraordinary in a quarter inhabited by Kayasthas even in a Municipal election.

The three candidates who have presented themselves this year (from Ward No. I) for the honour of a seat on the Municipal Board are all Kayasthas. Now these Kayasthas like others marry and give in marriage and thus form relationships. In Ward No. I, therefore, the Kayasthas, as a rule are related to each other.

When therefore (would-be) Commissioner No. I appears in the field his affectionate father-in-law as a matter of fact canvasses for him. The spectacle fires the relations of other candidates with emulation and they thus plunge themselves into the vortex of the whirlpool. The voters and candidates being all Kayasthas are related to each other. The voter who is the uncle-in-law of a candidate is the grand-father of another, and thus the candidates find themselves in the midst of voters, who are generally their relatives.

The usual rule for candidates in all countries is to base their appeals to voters upon their own merits. In Ward No. I it is based, with very few honourable exceptions upon relationship. One candidate pleads to

a voter :—‘Is not my brother your son-in-law?’ and thus secures the support of a voter. This voter is immediately after besieged by another candidate, who tries to convince him that the brother of a son-in-law can never have so much claim as the brother of a maternal uncle, which relation he bears to him. When such is the way the votes are canvassed for, it is no wonder that the candidates and voters should all lose their proper senses.

It was very calm in the beginning. At that time the candidates met and shook hands like friends. This was succeeded by squibs, lampoons and satires. And now it is foul abuse—abuse which fouls even the mouth of a fisherwoman.

It was very dull in the very beginning, when the candidates and their friends bowed to each other whenever they met, formally and politely. It was very exciting and exhilarating when lampoons and satires were hurled upon rivals. Now that abuses have been resorted to the matter has become more nauseating than putrid human flesh.

During the lampooning stage one candidate and his friends issued a squib in which his opponent was described as a ‘Jessore plague’. Now this is very good and unobjectionable. A squib on the other side was also amusing and unobjectionable. Thus, one candidate bears the name which can be rendered into ‘lord of brutes’. His opponent bears a name which means ‘pearl’. Taking advantage of the names of the candidates the friends of the latter enquire, ‘How can *brute* appreciate a *pearl*?’”

Commenting on the methods of canvassing in Calcutta the *Behar Herald* wrote :—

A good deal of excitement is reported to be prevalent in Calcutta over the impending Municipal elections that come off on the 15th March, on which day all the offices are likely to be closed. It would appear from what we have learnt that the Chamber of Commerce and the Trades Association are not over-anxious to exercise their privilege ; but the Indian constituency are all up and doing. Canvassing is warmly going on, but why there should be need for canvassing for such men as Babu Motilal Ghose of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, and Babu Durga Gati Banerjee Rai Bahadur, Collector of Calcutta, is what we do not understand. It is enough

that such men offer themselves as candidates. Let not Calcutta illustrate by the rejection of these men as Municipal Commissioners that it cannot appreciate real worth. The metropolis of India which ought to be the strongest hold of local self-government in the country cannot afford to be said of its taste, 'Pearl before the swine.'

The 15th of March was fixed for the polling of votes. On the 14th of March before Mr. Justice Trevelyan in the Calcutta High Court, Mr. Hill, Counsel on behalf of Babu Pasupati Nath Bose, rival candidate of Babu Motilal Ghose, applied under Section 45 of the Specific Relief Act for the issue of a rule on Mr. Lee, Chairman of the Calcutta Municipality and Babu Motilal Ghose to show cause why Motilal's name should not be struck off the list of candidates for election in Ward No. I. Mr. Hill argued that Motilal could not stand as a candidate because he did not pay any rates or taxes to the Corporation individually in his own name, but that he was the member of a joint family and he could not be a voter or a candidate. There was a lengthy discussion after which His Lordship delivered judgment holding that the registration of Motilal's name had been done according to the provisions of the Calcutta Municipal Act.

Great excitement prevailed on the 15th March. The Metropolitan Institution premises (now Shyambazar Vidyasagar School) formed the election booth. Goondaism prevailed and voters were physically restrained from voting. So that, ultimately mounted police had to be requisitioned. Moti Lal, however, was defeated and his rivals Pashupati Nath Bose and Bhupendra Nath Basu won the field. Never again throughout his eventful life did Moti Lal contest any election.

A fortnight after the elections were over a meeting was held at the Albert Hall under the auspices of the Calcutta Students' Association under the presidency of Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea. Babu Satish Chandra Bose in a vigorous speech moved for the raising of the Municipal franchise in Calcutta "owing to the failure of the last election." To show

how the election had failed he referred to the defeat of Moti Lal in Ward No. I. Said he :—

“Babu Moti Lal Ghose, the Editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* who was supported by the entire Press as a man of sterling ability, unquestionable honour and sturdy independence was rejected not on political grounds but because his canvassing was not up to the mark. This gentleman's illustrious brother Babu Shishir Kumar Ghose has laid the rate-payers under a debt of immense endless gratitude by persuading Sir Richard Temple to confer upon them the invaluable boon of election. They ought to have sought to discharge in part at least the debt they owe to Shishir Kumar by returning his brother who is so worthily wearing his mantle and following so faithfully in the path of duty he chalked out for him.”

Babu Nabo Kumar Ghose in seconding the resolution said :—

“Babu Moti Lal Ghose was not returned because he failed to promise sumptuous feasts to the voters—because he had not the meanness to buy off votes—because it was the *Patrika* that by its powerful advocacy secured to the people of Bengal the privilege of electing their own men as Commissioners.”

Babu Nirode Chandra Chatterjee, B.A., moved an amendment “to extend the privilege of voting to the poorer but more educated classes.”

Babu Surendra Nath Banerjia spoke in favour of the amendment. He regretted with the mover that Babus Nagendra Nath Ghose and Moti Lal Ghose had not been returned and admitted that they would have been valuable acquisitions to the Municipal Board, but that was no reason, he said, why they should find fault with the elections. He, however, confessed he could not understand why Babu Moti Lal Ghose was rejected.

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## CHAPTER XV

### "HITABADI" DEFAMATION CASE

A Year of Strifes—Bengal Papers Abusing Each other—Sj. Krishna Kumar Mitter on Moti Lal's Conduct—Poet Nobin Sen's Version—Moti Lal and Surendra Nath—United For A Time.

The year 1896—97 was a year of strifes. The famous *Hitabadi* Defamation Case in which Pandit Kali Prasanna Kavva-Visharad, editor of that paper was prosecuted for libelling a Brahmo educationist's wife in the columns of that paper took place in that year. While this case was going on a series of articles were being exchanged between Moti Lal Ghose in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* on one side and Surendra Nath Banerjea in the *Bengalee* and Narendra Nath Sen in the *Indian Mirror* on the other hand. The fact is that Surendra Nath as a member of the then Legislative Council had agreed to certain taxation clauses in the Drainage Bill. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* opposed it. Surendra Nath ascribed this opposition to personal jealousy. The result was that for days together, if not, for months, the Bengal papers went on abusing each other. The controversy attracted the attention of newspapers of other Provinces. The Congress was to sit in Calcutta. So, many persons taking interest in public matters tried to bring about peace between the fighting parties "to save the Congress." Many of them called upon Moti Lal to intervene and he did his part but failed to bring about any compromise. In this connection the following letter written to the Editor of the *Indian Mirror* by Babu Krishna Kumar Mitter, (editor of *Sanjibani*) and published in that paper will be interesting:—

"To The Editor of *The Indian Mirror*,

"Sir,—Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee's organ, the *Bengalee*, has been grossly abusing Babu Moti Lal Ghose, the Editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* since the day when he had the boldness to oppose the Suakin resolution moved by Babu Surendra Nath at the last Provincial

Conference and to praise two Bengali members of the Legislative Council in connection with the Drainage Bill controversy.

The latest charge, which has been brought against Moti Babu, is that he has identified himself with the *Hitabadi* defamation case. The charge is utterly false. Babu Moti Lal Ghose came to me more than once to request me to have the case compromised. He also went to Pandit Mahesh Chunder Nyayaratna to induce him to exert his good influence to settle the case out of court, but the defendant did not think it proper to go to his place to settle the terms of apology. For all this trouble what has been the reward of Moti Babu?—unmitigated slander and vilification.

Yours etc.,

KRISHNA KUMAR MITRA."

Poet Nabin Chunder Sen in his "Autobiography" has described at length the rivalry that existed between Moti Lal Ghose and Surendra Nath Banerjee on the eve of the Calcutta Congress in 1896. He has also described in detail the famous *Hitabadi* defamation case. In this connection he has also described how in this case Surendra Nath sided with Kavya-Visharad and Moti Lal was against him. Indeed he has gone the length of characterising Moti Lal as being the "chief instigator" of the Brahmo Professor, which means that it was at his instigation that the Professor brought the case against Kavya-Visharad. I am constrained to remark that the Poet's memory perhaps failed him when he wrote this part, at least, of his reminiscence. It will be clear if we compare the portion of his reminiscence dealing with this matter with his evidence before the High Court Sessions in that case. Following is an English translation of what he writes in his "Autobiography." (Volume V, p. 175):—

"At the outset brother Moti of the *Amrita Bazar* brought a soiled copy of an issue of the *Hitabadi* to my house and made me understand that there was a 'gross libel' in it. He had underlined many a time a certain word—'this' or something like that. He said that this word was fatal. I was about to smile. Afterwards I heard from him that Kavya-Visharad was



formerly a doll in his hands and that he had shaped him. But now that doll had not only gone over to the hand of Suren Banerjee, but was showering bitter banter on him by calling him 'Ghosh-nandan' every now and then in the columns of the *Hitabadi*. Brother Moti had therefore made a firm determination to teach a lesson this time to this ungrateful wretch. I cannot vouch for its truth. I heard it afterwards that it was he who was sacrificing the poor Brahmo (complainant) and he was the chief instigator of this libel case.

"He had tried to convince another 'famous' man—who wrote about it to one of my friends. When in spite of my prayers to Surendra Nath my name was not removed from the list of witnesses, I tried to induce brother Moti to bring about a compromise. On one occasion I spent the hours from evening to 10 o'clock at night at the Ganges side near his Baghbazar\* house discussing this matter. But *I found that he was not at all willing to have a compromise*. No gentleman could offer the type of apology that he wanted to be given. When I showed that to Surendra Babu he said that Kavya-Visharad would never agree to that." (Italics are mine).

But in his evidence in court we find a different story. Babu Nabin Chandra Sen, the poet, who was then Personal Assistant to the Commissioner of Chittagong had been examined on behalf of the defence when the *Hitabadi* defamation case had come up for hearing before the High Court Sessions. In course of cross-examination by Mr. Garth, the well-known Barrister, he had said:—

"I never contribute to newspapers. I have known the accused (Kavya-Visharad) for three or four months, since a few days before the publication of this poem. He was introduced to me by the Hon'ble Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee in his Office, as the Editor of the *Hitabadi* of which I was a subscriber. I am personally interested in this case in so far as I tried to compromise this case. *I was asked to compromise this case first by Babu Moti Lal Ghose, Editor of the Amrita Bazar Patrika; and also by Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee and the Hon'ble Mr. A. M. Bose. Babu Moti Lal Ghose on behalf of the complainant asked me to compromise the case.*" (Italics are mine).

It will thus be seen that the two versions of Moti Lal's conduct as given in the poet's Autobiography and his evidence

before the Court are not only different from each other but quite contradictory. Judging from Babu Krishna Kumar Mitra's letter the version given before the Court by the poet *i.e.*, the earlier version seems to be the correct one. I have often wondered what led the poet to give a different version in his Autobiography.

All differences between Moti Lal and Surendra Nath due to the *Hitabadi* case were however made up, at least till the holding of the Congress Session. They began paying compliments to each other. In the Congress Surendra Nath was to move a resolution on the famine that was then troubling the country. As Surendra Nath was entering the tent at the Beadon Square where the Congress was being held Moti Lal handed over to him a packet containing photographs of the emaciated figures of men, women and children who were starving in the poor houses of Jubbulpore and in the roads and streets there. Surendra Nath referred to these photographs in his speech and paid a tribute to the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, "which has done admirable service in this connection," in which W. S. Caine, M.P., who was present in the Congress, also joined. Moti Lal thus complimented Surendra Nath in return in the columns of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* :

"The most important resolution before the Congress this year was decidedly the one relating to the present famine. No one was more fitted to deal with this all-important and all-absorbing topic of the day than that distinguished orator, the Hon'ble Surendra Nath Banerjee, and it is needless to say that he did the fullest justice to the subject. He not only poured out his fervid eloquence when speaking on the resolution but also brought forward evidence of an unimpeachable character to prove that, at least in the Central Provinces, thousands of people were being decimated by famine in consequence of the apathy of the rulers. And what was the nature of this evidence? Well, the evidence consisted of facts and figures which were published in the official *Gazette* of the Central Provinces and the photos of famine-stricken people taken at Jubbulpore and other places. Surely these photos, and facts and figures cannot lie! How we wish Lord Elgin and Mr. Lyall had come

and heard the speech of Babu Surendra Nath and the others who followed him !”

Throughout their lives Moti Lal and Surendra Nath fought with and complimented each other by turns. A collection of these events would make very interesting reading. I shall have occasion to refer to some of them.

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## CHAPTER XVI

### BENGAL PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE

District Associations—Necessity of Provincial Conferences—On ‘Way to Madras Congress—Some Stories—Moti Lal’s Food—First Years of the Conference—Nator Conference—The Great Earthquake of 1897—Views on Death.

Before the advent of the National Congress, Provincial questions were taken care of by local Associations. Every district in Bengal had its Association, and almost all these public bodies were full of life and vigour. The leading men of the districts considered it a duty and honour to join these associations, and there was not a question, affecting the interests of the country, which did not engage their serious attention. When Sir George Campbell introduced his Municipal measure, the whole of the Province of Bengal rose to a man to oppose it. Similarly the Public Works Cess Bill of Sir Ashley Eden and the Gaggling Act of Lord Lytton were opposed tooth and nail by public meetings brought about by these associations. On the other hand the Local Self-Government measure of Lord Ripon was popularised throughout the Province by means of these local bodies. But with the advent of the Indian National Congress most of the District Associations died a natural death or became moribund. The Congress superseded their influence—and they soon lost their prestige and usefulness and languished away for want of popular support. The impression soon got hold of the minds of the people that the Congress would be able to remove their

grievances which the district associations had not been able to do, and thus they began to neglect the local bodies.

But before long it was found out that the Congress could take up only all-India questions and any programme chalked out by the Congress could not be easily carried into practice in the Provinces. Hence arose the necessity of holding Provincial Conferences, which were primarily concerned with provincial matters. The Provincial Conference sat for the first time in the year 1888. Since then up to 1894 it was held in Calcutta. But in 1895 the venue was for the first time transferred to a mofussil town—Berhampore. Since then it has been held in many mofussil towns.

The Bengal Provincial Conference was held at Nator in June 1897. The Conferences for the previous two years were held at Berhampore and Krishnagore. Previous to that the Conference was held in Calcutta year by year. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* suggested from time to time that Provincial Conferences should be held in the mofussil towns where people would be able to concentrate their attention on local and provincial matters, whereas the Congress would deal with matters concerning the whole of India. Going backwards the Provincial Conference of Bengal as distinguished from the Congress was, really speaking, inaugurated in 1888, in deference to the opinion expressed by the Bengal delegates assembled at Madras on the occasion of the National Congress held in that town in the previous year. Moti Lal had been one of the delegates from Bengal to the Congress at Madras in December 1887 who was keen on holding the Provincial Conference.

Speaking of the Madras Congress I am reminded of an incident to which Moti Lal often referred in his later life. The delegates from Bengal went to Madras by a steamer from Calcutta which was specially chartered for the occasion. Among the delegates there were several England-returned gentlemen who predominated the Congress in those days. They were accustomed to take their meals in the right royal English fashion. They not only used the dining table and spoon and fork, but their courses were also as much in imitation of the

English dishes as possible. Now one of these delegates, probably Mr. W. C. Bonnerjea, who happened to be very intimate with Moti Lal requested him to sit by him at dinner. When the first course, which was a soup, arrived Moti Lal inquired of its ingredients. On being told that it was prepared with tongues and tails of young calves, Moti Lal refused even to touch it, far less drink it. At first his friend sang a panegyric on the young calves' tongues. One's life, he said, was in vain if one did not take these delicious things. Gradually he grew cross. 'But Moti Lal sat like a statue with his hands up. 'I felt nauseating when I found that my friend also took raw oysters in his dinner,' said Moti Lal when narrating this incident in after life. And yet Moti Lal had never been very orthodox about his food, though he was a teetotaler all his life and took only one or two *pans* (betel-leaf) only after his meals.

Once in his life he had taken ham or rather hog's meat. It was while he was yet in his teens in his native village Amrita Bazar (then called Palua Magura). But let me tell it in his own language as far as I can. Said he while narrating this affair :—

"In my native village Palua Magura there lived a band of people of the Bedia caste who cultivated lands and tended hogs. Off and on Bedias came to our place and begged of this and that thing. Now one day a Bedia came to our house and begged of my mother a little quantity of mustard oil. 'Good Mother,' said the Bedia, 'will you kindly give me a little quantity of mustard oil? I have killed a hog and will roast it with oil.' Mother gave him some quantity of mustard oil and inquired, 'You Bedias take hog's meat, how does it taste?' Instead of directly answering the question the Bedia put a question to my mother, 'Mother, have you taken *muri* (fried rice) with small pieces of cocoanut?' 'Why not? Certainly I have taken *muri* and cocoanut and enough too.' 'That's all right,' said the Bedia, 'you know the taste of hog's meat, for it is exactly like that.' 'Rama, Rama,' cried my mother."

Perhaps, it was this incident which subconsciously acted within his mind and prompted him to taste hog's meat as soon

as the first opportunity arrived. But to go on with the story. Said Moti Lal :—

“Not long after this a Bedia *raiya*t (tenant) of my father's came to our place and pleaded that he would not be able to pay his rent. In place of rent he offered to give a hog. Father of course refused to take it. When the *raiya*t had gone somewhat away from our house I and some of my brothers met him and asked him to give the hog to us. He not only agreed but also killed it himself and helped us to cook it in a garden in the outskirts of our village and we partook of it, though not, with much relish.”

The above incident was narrated by Moti Lal to the members of his family and to many of his friends in my presence more than once. This was perhaps the only occasion when Moti Lal took any forbidden food. Though a devout Vaishnava Moti Lal had no fad about food. He took fish regularly and almost daily, though not in a large quantity, and meat on very rare occasions. I have seen him taking chicken soup also under medical advice. If I remember aright, in a certain law-suit when he was put a question by the Barrister of the opposite party, probably Mr. (afterwards Sir) N. N. Sircar, as to whether he took fowls or not he admitted that he did so under medical advice. Throughout his life Moti Lal was very regular and moderate in his diet, which always included milk or *dahi* (curd) twice or thrice a day. A cup of milk on returning from morning walk, a cup of milk along with the mid-day meal and a cup of milk with the night-meal were a regular feature of his diet. This enabled him to do an enormous quantity of brain work and though he was frail in body his capacity to do brain work was extraordinary. He was a valetudinarian throughout his life, but always working. He was rarely laid up in bed for long and could work even though he was ill. Latterly he had given up milk on account of wind trouble in his stomach and took *dahi* in its stead regularly along with his morning and night meals. If he could be said to have any fad about his food it must be *dahi*, for without it he would feel very uncomfortable and would rarely go without it. He took tea very sparingly, but latterly he had given it up altogether. While we were

at Koilwar in the year 1918-19 myself and my younger brother Atulananda took tea several times in a day. It was very cold there and we relished it. We tried our utmost to persuade him to take tea at least once in a day, but he did not agree. He would say, "Now that I have given it up I am not going to take it again." In its place he would take cow's milk or malted milk. Under medical advice he had taken Laudanum (*Tinctura Opii*) for years, but latterly he had given it up also and would not take a drop of it even if requested by some of his medical advisers to do so. Ordinarily he was very much constipated and for years he had to take enema and douche ; and he recommended the latter to many of his friends when they complained of constipation. He took fruits and fruit-juice regularly, but his constipation never left him. But this is a digression.

The first Provincial Conference of Bengal was held at the British Indian Association rooms in Calcutta. Representatives from 28 districts of Bengal attended. Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar, the famous doctor, to whose munificence is due the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science presided. It was in the year 1888 ; since then annual Conferences on similar lines were held till 1895, when a departure was made. Before that the Conference was held annually in Calcutta. It was discovered that as the Conference dealt with questions affecting Bengal it would be better if it were moving from town to town. Thus 1895 saw the Conference at Berhampur where it was invited by the late Baikuntha Nath Sen, so well-known for his activities in connection with the Congress and for the welfare of the people. Next year it was held at Krishnagar in the historic hall of the Maharaja of Nadia. In 1897 it was presided over by Mr. Satyendra Nath Tagore, retired I.C.S., and held at Nator under the patronage of the descendants of Rani Bhowani.

The Nator Conference was held in a specially improvised pandal. More than 200 delegates and 3000 people were present. The pandal could accommodate more than one thousand people; so, many had to wait outside or go away for want of seats. Amongst those present were Messrs. W. C. Bonnerjee, A. M. Bose, Maharaja Jagadindra Nath Roy, Babu Tarapada Bannerjee

of Krishnagar, Babu Akshoy Kumar Moitra of Rajshahi, Raja Sashisekhareswar Roy, Babu Baikuntha Nath Sen, Babu Hari Prosad Chatterji of Krishnagar, Babus Moti Lal Ghose, Bhupendra Nath Basu, Guru Prasad Sen, Hirendra Nath Datta and others.

For two days the Conference went on smoothly, but on the third day, the 12th of June 1897 happened an incident which is still remembered in Bengal. There was a great earthquake at about five o'clock in the afternoon all over Bengal. The shock lasted for about 5 minutes. In Calcutta a large number of buildings collapsed or were damaged and the earthquake created a havoc with houses in many other towns. The Conference had almost come to its close when the earthquake began. Moti Lal who was inside the pandal has given a description of the scene from which I quote :—

“It was at about 5 p.m. on Saturday last when the Conference had nearly concluded its deliberations, that the first intimation of the earthquake was received by the delegates assembled in the pandal. There were about five hundred men collected outside the pavilion, and it was they who first raised the alarm by the usual cry of *Haribole*, uttered during such visitations. Two or three minutes before, the atmosphere had become so oppressively hot that the Hon'ble Babu Guru Prasad Sen had to leave the meeting, saying that he could not bear it any longer. Within a few seconds of the announcement of the earthquake, the terrific nature of the shock was perceived by everybody. Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee now stood up, and, with his loud and sonorous voice, asked the assembled gentlemen not to leave their seats but to keep quiet; though he himself was reeling like a drunkard. There was thus no rush, to the credit of the delegates; but as the pandal began to rock to and fro, literally like a vessel in a tempestuous sea, every one sought refuge in the open air. Very few, however, could stand on their legs. Some fell flat on the ground, while others were obliged to be unsteady like drunken men.

“Perhaps the severest shock was felt about four minutes later on. It was then that the horrible character of the visitation was realised. It seemed to everybody that the earth was sinking. The alarm was raised that we were being engulfed! As a matter of fact, fissures were seen all around us; and water, sand and some other



substance which smelt something like sulphur, were being forced up through these rents. The prospect before us was awful indeed. We all were going to be buried alive!

"The severity of the shock, however, gradually abated and it ceased completely after six minutes. Then we passed through a unique experience. A rumbling sound like that of a distant thunder passed underneath the ground where we stood, and the atmosphere assumed a peculiar stillness and oppressiveness, indicating that something, more awful than what we had witnessed, was in store for us. The rumbling noise ceased, and immediately the ground began to rend and send forth water and a peculiarly black substance. A large piece of ground, about one hundred cubits in length and nearly as much in breadth, lying close to the beautiful garden house of Raja Jogendra Nath Roy where we had put up, immediately sank down and was converted into something like a little tank!

"Half-an-hour after the occurrence though yet in a state of agitation, the delegates sat down again to transact the portion of the business of the Conference which had been left unfinished. . . .

"Raja Jogendra Nath and Maharaja Jagadindra Nath were in the pandal when the earthquake took place. They at once ran to their respective houses, the former to find that his palace was lying in a heap of ruins, and the latter to find that his newly-built palace had been considerably damaged. Fortunately no lives were lost, though the wife of the Maharaja of Natore had fainted away, and it was feared at first that she would not survive. The loss of Raja Jogendra Nath was immense, but what affected him most was the destruction of the celebrated Joy Kaley temple and the image of the Goddess itself. Between three to four hundred of hungry people were daily fed in this temple. Some two hundred and fifty people had finished their meal, and another two hundred were about to sit to dinner when the catastrophe took place. They all fled and saved their lives, except one old woman who was killed on the spot."

Moti Lal also described how an evening party that had been arranged that day to meet the delegates at the palace of the Raja of Dighapatia had to be abandoned.

In the above description of the earthquake we do not find any mention of an episode which I have found him narrating

on many occasions. It is this. When the earthquake took place Moti Lal along with several other delegates came out of the pandal and five or six of them arm in arm began to reel to and fro as if they were dancing. Moti Lal felt very much amused and began to laugh and dance. At this a venerable gentleman whose arm he was holding and who had shown much courage in the beginning suddenly broke down; he began to cry aloud like a little child when he found that a portion of the land behind them had gone down. He began to say, "We are dying, dying, our end is near." The more Moti Lal laughed and danced in joy, the more the gentleman wept. Moti Lal never feared death. He had all along treated death as an ordinary event, an event that would happen in due course and about which one should not make much fuss. "Death" he held, "is a blessing to those who have sorrows of their own and who have no worldly prosperity to leave behind. Death is dreadful to those who have worldly prosperity and are bewitched by it. Dear friend death is a fine leveller; and when he comes, the heedless being who laughs at others' sorrows and who never expected his presence, weeps in turn."

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### EVOLUTION OF THE LAW OF SEDITION.

India In Famine's Grip—Lokamanya Tilak's Conviction—Tilak's Letter—Justice Strachey On Sedition—Newspaper Comments—The Sedition Bill—Protests From All Sides—Natu Brothers' Plight.

The year 1897 was a bad year for India. The whole country was in the grip of a terrible famine on account of successive failures of crop and exportation of a large portion of what was produced in the land. Famine Relief Societies were established and they did what they could but it is not possible for private organisations whose resources are limited to do anything substantial and on a large scale on such occasions unless Government with their unlimited resources come forward to

help. From time to time the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* published gruesome descriptions of the sufferings of the famished people, how men, women and children were lying on roadsides with bodies which consisted of mere skin and bone, how the wealthy people had become so much accustomed to such sights that they had ceased to be moved by them. And along with such descriptions the *Patrika* appealed to the Government and the people to do what they could for the famine-stricken people.

The Indian Relief Society of Calcutta which consisted of men like Raja Benoy Krishna Dev, Mr. A. M. Bose, Babu Guru Prasad Sen, Rev. Kali Charan Banerjee, Babu Moti Lal Ghose, Babu Sitanath Roy, Ray Parbati Sankar Chaudhury, Rai Yatindra Nath Chaudhury, Babu Hirendra Nath Datta, Babu Amrita Krishna Mallik, Mr. C. R. Das, Babu Kishori Lal Sarkar and others, now moved the Government for advancing money to the distressed *raiya*ls.

The articles in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and the appeals of the Relief Society had some effect on the Government which not only advanced money to the suffering people but also made large concessions providing for a remission of a portion of the money advanced.

Plague followed famine and scarcity. If the disease itself was terrible and created consternation among the people the measures taken by the Government at the direction of their medical advisers were no less so. People fled from cities more for fear of these measures than fear of the disease. The segregation camps to which all the members of a family, any member of which was attacked with plague, were taken were anything but habitable places. They were certainly not safe for ladies of *bhadralok* families to live in. There was one such camp at Khana near Burdwan and several specific cases were published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* describing the treatment meted out to *bhadralok* ladies in that camp. Pandita Rama Bai of Bombay narrated her experience of some of the plague hospitals and segregation camps of Bombay in the columns of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* which were sickening to a degree.

It was a bad year for journalism also. Several prosecutions

were launched against newspapers for writing strongly against measures taken by Government to cope with the plague. The conductor of a Bombay paper named *Protada* was sentenced to transportation for life for the fault of publishing a paragraph which was held to be seditious. Two brothers known as Natu brothers were deported under Regulation III of 1818. There were several other convictions also, the most famous of them being that of Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak in connection with some articles in his paper the *Keshari*.

Now Tilak and Moti Lal were deeply attached to each other. So, as soon as the news of the arrest of the great nationalist leader reached Calcutta Moti Lal tried his best to help him in his distress. It was not possible to get good counsels at Bombay as all the leading counsels of that province had already been engaged by the Bombay Government. So, Lokamanya Tilak's Bengal friends among whom mention may be made of Moti Lal Ghose, Bhupendra Nath Basu and Babu Hirendra Nath Datta, raised funds for his defence and helped him substantially.

At this juncture some friends of Lokamanya Tilak suggested to him to make up his quarrel with the Government by making an apology. But when this proposal reached Tilak he was deeply pained. As a matter of fact Moti Lal in consultation with some of his friends thought of approaching Government to persuade them to drop the case against Tilak as they had done in the *Bangabasi* case. So, Moti Lal wrote to Tilak about this matter. In this connection Lokamanya wrote a letter to Moti Lal from which is given the following extract :—

“The other side expects me to do what amounts to be pleading guilty. I am not prepared to do so. My position amongst the people entirely depends upon my character: and if I am cowed down by the prosecution—in the heart of my hearts I know the case for the prosecution is the weakest that was ever placed before a Jury—I think, living in Maharashtra is as good as living in the Andamans. On the merits of the case I am confident of success, though I cannot in this letter and in the present state of my health give you all my

reasons. I am afraid only of a non-Maharatta-knowing Jury and not of justice. You as well as I know that we are incapable of nourishing any sinister feeling against British rule, and it is thus impossible for any of us to be convicted of such a heinous charge as sedition. Such risks, however, we must take if we dabble in politics. They are the risks of our profession, and I am prepared to face them. If you all advise, I am prepared to go only so far as this:—‘I don’t think that the articles are seditious, but the advisers of the Government think otherwise. I am sorry for it.’ But this will not satisfy the Government. Their object is to humiliate the Poona leaders, and I think in me they will not find a *Kutch* reed as they did in Professor Gokhale and the editor of the *Gnyan Prokash*. Then you must remember, beyond a certain stage we are all servants of the people. You will be betraying and disappointing them if you show a lamentable want of courage at a crucial time. But above all as an honest and honourable man, how can I plead guilty to the charge of entertaining sedition when I had none? If I am convicted the sympathy of my countrymen will support me in my trouble.”

But it is well-known that Lokamanya Tilak was convicted and sentenced to 18 months’ rigorous imprisonment. The article in question was written in Marathi. The most curious feature of the trial was that though three of the jurors who knew the Marathi language found him “not guilty,” six British Jurors who did not know a word of Marathi found him guilty.

Lokamanya Tilak’s conviction cast a deep gloom over the whole of India. The short-lived Press Association of Calcutta, which consisted of some leading journalists met at the rooms of the British Indian Association and a resolution was passed to the effect that as a mark of their sorrow and sympathy for the misfortune which had overtaken Tilak all the papers represented in the Association should appear in black, at least, for one day. So, on the 25th of September, 1897 the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* appeared in black lines and a three-column long leading article, rather unusual for the *Patrika*, was published. It showed a depth of feeling which was possible only in a great personal friend. A series of

articles followed criticising the charge to the Jury given by Mr. Justice Strachey and assailing his exposition of the law of sedition. But all this was nothing more than knocking one's head against a stone wall.

It was soon realised by Indian leaders that the interpretation put by Mr. Justice Strachey upon the law of sedition as embodied in Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code would seriously affect the liberty of the Press and the freedom of speech of the people. So, a Committee was formed by the Indian Relief Society to raise funds for proceeding with an appeal to the Privy Council and within a fortnight the requisite sum of Rs. 12,000 was raised. Amongst others the following gentlemen were in the Committee:—Mr. T. Palit, Sj. Gaganendra Nath Tagore, Rai Yatindra Nath Chaudhury, Mr. J. Chaudhury, Mr. J. Ghosal, Sj. Moti Lal Ghose, Sj. Hirendra Nath Datta, Mr. Guru Prasad Sen, Sjts. Bhupendra Nath Basu, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Surendra Nath Banerjea and others.

It may be said here that even Anglo-Indian papers like the *Indian Daily News* and the *Statesman* were not satisfied with the interpretation of the law as given by Mr. Justice Strachey. The former said, "it was not fair and not wise." The *Morning Post* of Delhi, a paper conducted by Englishmen, also characterised the proceedings as "unjust" and "vindictive."

In the *Bangabasi* case Sir Comer Petheram had explained the term "disaffection" occurring in Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code as "contrary to affection" but Mr. Justice Strachey in his charge to the Jury had gone one step further. He explained "disaffection" as "absence of affection" and thus widened the scope of the sedition section of the Penal Code. The meaning of the word "disaffection" was thus not limited to any positive feeling like hatred, ill-will, etc., but it was extended to mean the absence of affection or indifference. The English Press did not support the judgment. The Liberal Press, without exception, condemned the line of argument taken by Mr. Justice Strachey and many Tory editors also took the same view. Of course the great Jingo group, the

*Mail, Globe, St. James and Pall Mall*, were delighted at the conviction. Commenting on the judgment the *Daily Chronicle* wrote on September 16, 1897:—

“There is one aspect of the ‘sedition’ trials in India which must not be lost sight of and that is the new definition of ‘disaffection’ enunciated by Mr. Justice Strachey, according to whom ‘disaffection’ may be seditious even though it be simply strong disapproval of some omission on the part of the Government. We feel confident that such an interpretation of the law would not be tolerated in England, and if not speedily over-ruled, may produce grave mischief in India.”

The Privy Council, it is well-known, did not admit Tilak’s appeal. More than thirty-five years have since gone by ; but the law of sedition in India still stands in the same ‘position in which Mr. Justice Strachey put it in the face of strong public opinion and it was only recently that Justice Sir Charu Chandra Ghose said from the bench of the Calcutta High Court in a case in which proceedings were drawn up against the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*:—

“It is said that the writer has contravened the rule laid down by Mr. Justice Strachey. I would point out that what was considered seditious under Section 124A I. P. C., in 1897 may not necessarily be held to be so in 1932 ; one cannot shut one’s eyes to changes in political conceptions due to the march of events and to the declared objectives of the Government of the day.”

After the conviction of Lokamanya Tilak an amendment was sought to be made in the definition of the word “disaffection” in the Sedition Section of the Indian Penal Code. The Hon’ble Mr. Chalmers who was in charge of the Amendment Bill introduced four vague words. They were hatred, contempt, enmity and ill-will. The word disaffection was not given a clear meaning, but was made to include these things, i.e., disaffection was made to include things which it did not. This gave rise to a volley of protest from the Indian press. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* published many a leading article criticising the measure and indulged in a good deal of banter, ridicule and lampoon. Protest meetings were held in various places asking the Government not to proceed with the measure.

Towards the end of January, 1898 a Conference was held at the rooms of the British Indian Association, Calcutta, to protest against the Sedition Bill. The pick of the then Calcutta society was there and Maharaja Sir Jatindra Mohan Tagore was in the chair. Those were days of meetings and memorials, they knew not other forms of protest. So, a draft memorial was read before the Conference, which, however, was not satisfied with the memorial and appointed a Sub-Committee consisting of Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee, Rajah Peary Mohun Mukherjee, Mr. J. Chaudhury, Mr. W. C. Madge, Babu Moti Lal Ghose and Babu Kishori Lal Sarkar, with Ray Raj Coomar Sarbadhicary Bahadur as Secretary for the purpose of recasting the memorial. Towards the middle of February a big public meeting was held at the Town Hall under the Presidentship of Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee in which amongst other resolutions the memorial to the Viceroy as recasted was adopted in which it was said :—

- “That your memorialists further humbly pray that Your Excellency in Council may be pleased to sanction the insertion in Section 124A, a definition of “disaffection” in the sense in which it was explained by the Indian Law Commissioners, to sanction the omission of the vague and uncertain words “hatred”, “contempt” and “enmity” and of any provision throwing upon a person accused under Section 505 I. P. C. the proof of the absence of the intent charged or dispensing with the proof of the intent and to limit the scope of that
- section to what is false, and to sanction the omission from the Bill to amend the Code of Criminal Procedure of any provision enabling Magistrates to adjudicate upon offences under Section 124A of the Penal Code, etc.”

Babu Moti Lal Ghose was one of the organisers of this meeting and amongst those who took part in the proceedings were Rai Amrita Nath Mitter Bahadur, Mr. C. E. Grey, Barrister-at-Law, Babus Surendra Nath Banerjee, Narendra Nath Sen, Baikuntha Nath Sen, Kali Charan Banerjee. Babu Rabindra Nath Tagore also addressed the meeting in Bengali.

In spite of protests from all sides of the country the Sedition Bill was passed into law. There was nothing surprising in it ; the people had got accustomed to their opinion



being flouted by the Government. There were five hundred petitions against the Age of Consent Bill and they were disposed of in seven words by Sir A. Scoble, "we have read and considered the objections." Mr. Chalmers who was in charge of the Sedition Bill played a similar part. "I freely admit that our proposals have met with a good deal of criticism," he said and he brushed aside everything and passed the Bill into law. The arguments advanced by the Calcutta Bar, the Defence Association, the Chamber of Commerce and many other Associations and individuals were thus smashed into pieces by the Law Member of the Government of India. Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, was brutally frank in his speech in support of the Bill. He enunciated the curious principle that:—

"The first duty of every Government, especially of a foreign Government, is self-preservation."

As if the preservation and welfare of the people may safely be relegated to the back-ground. And he quoted with approval Sir Fitz James Stephen's dictum:—

"Men must be content to take the risks incidental to their professions. A journalist must run the risk of being misunderstood, and should take care to make his meaning plain. If his intentions really are loyal, there can be no difficulty in his doing so. If not, he cannot complain of being punished."

Another of the matters which kept the Indian journalists bitterly complaining against the administration of India in the year 1897-98 was the arrest and detention without trial of two brothers named Natu in Bombay under the rusty Regulation III of 1818. They were at first charged with having had a hand in the murder of an official named Rand, who had made himself very unpopular on account of his activities in connection with the Plague quarantine in Bombay. It may be remembered that Lokamanya Tilak's conviction was also connected with the murder of this Rand, the charge against him being that his writings in the *Keshari* had excited the murderer. The Natu brothers were arrested on the 20th July, 1897. Since then they were detained without trial in spite

of great popular agitation throughout India. Ten months after the arrest, *i.e.*, in March 1898, Mr. W. Redmond, a Member of Parliament, put the question in Parliament as to whether even after this long detention the Government intended to bring the Natu brothers to an open trial, to which Lord George Hamilton, M.P. on behalf of the Government replied :

“No sir, if there were any evidence to justify their being put on a criminal charge, recourse would not have been had to this Act.”

A frank confession as to why Regulation III of 1818 is used !

The parallel of such a reply was found only the other day (1933) by the writer of this when he was on a chance visit to an Honorary Magistrate's Court when the officer was trying a case. Two persons were hauled up before the Magistrate by a police constable on a charge of disorderly conduct in a public street. The accused put a question to the constable, “You did not arrest us and were not on the scene when we were arrested?” The constable replied, “No, I did not arrest you. But another did it under my command. I was standing at a distance.” When the accused pleaded not guilty the Magistrate observed, “But why were you arrested at all? There are so many men in this country, but they are not arrested. Since you have been arrested, you must be guilty. I sentence you to pay a fine of Re. 1/- each.” The pleader went on pleading even after this. The Magistrate then observed, “Well, I think your clients are not guilty. Therefore I have fined them Rupee One only. If I had thought that they were guilty I would have fined them Rupees Five each.”

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* published a large number of leading articles and paragraphs protesting against the detention of the Natu brothers.

Commenting on the above interpellation in Parliament the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* wrote as follows :—

“Lord George Hamilton frankly confesses that there is no evidence against the Natus. What the Government did was to tell the Natus that they had committed a certain offence for which there is no evidence ! If the

outside public asks what the charge is, the Government refuses to answer. Never was the British Government placed in a more awkward position than what the incarceration of the Natus suggests. Let us put the Natus and the Government face to face.

"The Natus :—Why do you detain us ?

"The Government :—Because you have committed an offence.

"The Natus :—Then prove it in a Court of law.

"The Government :—That we cannot do, for, there is no evidence against you.

"Now that is the situation !

"The Natus were at first charged with having had a hand in the murder of Mr. Rand. The ground was shifted when Damodar Chapekar came forward to extricate them. Next their detention was justified because one of the brothers had played tricks. Now we are assured that they committed a certain offence though the nature of it, Lord George Hamilton does not know."

There were many such paragraphs and leading articles in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* on the Natu brothers. These and the numerous articles and paragraphs on Lokamanya Tilak had one effect—they exasperated the authorities but endeared Moti Lal to the hearts of the people of Maharastra. The Natu brothers were released after being in detention for more than two years but during the period of their incarceration they were never told what were the charges against them which up to the present day remain a sealed book to the public.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### MATTERS MUNICIPAL

Elective System in Calcutta Municipality—Mackenzie Bill—The Reason Behind—*Patrika's* Criticism—Protest Meetings—A Funny Story—Commissioners Resign—Bengal Act I of 1917.

The elective system was introduced into the Calcutta Municipality in the year '1877. Since then the people of

Calcutta had been enjoying this elective system. But it was left for Sir Alexander MacKenzie, before he had been scarcely one year in the *gadi* of Bengal, to discover that the Calcutta Municipality had "no constitution at all" and that in the Calcutta Municipality "everything was fluid and indefinite". His utterances in the Bengal Council relating to the Municipal Bill in the year 1898 created a great sensation. The elective system had been tried in the Calcutta Municipality for twenty years, but he now sought to take away the powers of the elected Commissioners and reduce them to the position of so many dummies. Nay more. Through these dummies the rate-payers were to be taxed, while the proceeds of the taxes were to be placed at the absolute disposal of the official Chairman and twelve favourites of the Government, "a Working Committee of twelve, elected and appointed so as to represent the three chief interests in Calcutta—the Government, the commercial community, and the residents." (speech of Sir A. MacKenzie). The elected Commissioners were to have no control over the doings of the executive officers. Sir Alexander MacKenzie did not take it into his consideration that since the elective system was first introduced in Calcutta five Lieutenant Governors had found it suitable. Sir Richard Temple, Sir Ashley Eden, Sir Rivers Thomson, Sir Stewart Bayley and Sir Charles Elliott—every one of them was satisfied with the work of the elected Commissioners, though Sir Ashley had at first threatened to smother the whole system.

The real reason why this revolutionary measure was introduced was that the Hindu Commissioners in the Calcutta Corporation outnumbered the English ones, and the Government wanted to take away the powers of the Hindu Commissioners and place them in the hands of persons the majority of whom would be Englishmen or *apkawastes* and *jo-hukums*, "basket-catchers" of the Government.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* at once saw through the game. It detected that the shibboleth of better administration was all bosh and nonsense and wrote in March 1898:—

"If the Bill be passed as it is, then adieu to local

Self-Government in the capital city of the Empire. In short what is proposed is to practically revive the old days of Sir Stuart Hogg and place the Municipal Funds at the absolute disposal of thirteen men of whom only four are to be the representatives of the people. It is for the rate-payers of Calcutta to decide whether they prefer the proposed arrangement to the present order. They have now got fifty of their representatives with some powers to watch their interests on the Municipal Board. They can now appoint their own Vice-Chairman, Health Officer, Collector, etc., and control the Budget. They can now check the high-handedness of the Executive Subordinates through their respective Ward Commissioners. But under the proposed law all this will be changed. Their representatives, if they return any, will be mere cyphers. They will not possess the power of even a Municipal peon. If the money of the rate-payers is wasted before their eyes, they will not be able to check it. The rate-payers can now compel their representatives to get their grievances redressed ; but under the proposed Act, they will be at the absolute mercy of the executive who will have everything in their own way. If they consider the Bill a retrograde one—and we cannot conceive how it can be regarded otherwise—they must be up and doing. They must let the Government know, in firm but respectful language, that they do not want the measure ; if the Government heeds them not, let them then ask the rulers to do away with the farce of the elective system altogether and convert the Municipal administration of Calcutta into a department of Government.”

Very soon the whole of Calcutta was in a ferment over the Calcutta Municipal Bill. Meetings protesting against the Bill were held in different quarters of the city and on the 31st August, 1898 a monster meeting was held at the Town Hall under the presidentship of Rajah Benoy Krishna Dev Bahadur of Sovabazar. Moti Lal was one of the organisers of these meetings, but generally he worked from behind and did not come before the footlight as a speaker.

Towards the beginning of the next year a public meeting of the citizens of Calcutta was held at the Classic Theatre to protest against the Municipal Bill. Moti Lal in taking the chair said :—

“I am not a so-called political agitator and have

never taken a prominent part in any public meeting, partly because my business is with the pen and not with the tongue, and partly because I have no need. I had been asked on several occasions to preside over meetings but had escaped by securing competent men. A Chairman is as essential in a public meeting as a bridegroom in a marriage ceremony. But the recruiting field for Chairmen has become very much narrowed for two reasons ; first, there have already been some two dozen public meetings to protest against the Municipal Bill, each meeting having had its new Chairman, and secondly a number of leading Indian gentlemen have kept themselves aloof because of the allegation of some mischievous persons to the effect that the movement is their work and that it is to serve their private and personal interests that they have set on foot this agitation."

Amongst other things Moti Lal referred to a particular clause of the Bill relating to the payment of fees of the members of the proposed General Committee. Said he :—

"The Europeans would not work in the Municipality ; hence, to tempt them, the authors of the Bill have to hold a bait in the shape of a fee of Rs. 32 per sitting. The object of this provision is plain—it is to transfer power from the hands of willing guardians to those of unwilling aliens and thus to Europeanise the Corporation. The arrangement is unnatural and whatever is unnatural is bound to fail. If a child is taken away from its mother and placed under the care of a paid nurse, it is bound to suffer."

• Moti Lal then gave a graphic description of how the then existing elective system had been introduced in the Calcutta Municipality a little more than 20 years ago and said that if this system was to be abolished and the one proposed by the MacKenzie Bill introduced it would mean everlasting disability for Indians and the aspiration for Self-Government in India would become a delusion and a mockery. He said that the MacKenzie Bill was going to re-introduce the official system in a more aggravated form, which prevailed before 1876, and was universally condemned, and which failed so miserably as to lead Indians and Europeans to combine and demand its demolition and pray for the introduction of the elective system.

By the bye, I may here mention one thing. Many of our public meetings are often marred by third-class speakers possessing the house and speaking on without caring how the audience are taking them. They often speak beside the point and bore the audience who have to go away disappointed. Unfortunately in public meetings in this country the Chairmen generally give great indulgence to the speakers who go on rambling. Such rambling speakers are very rarely called to order either by the Chairman or the audience. It often happens that the Chairman and the assembled gentlemen feel impatient and are tired and yet they calmly surrender to the torrents of irrelevant nonsense spit forth by an ignorant speaker. Moti Lal was very much against these speakers and always opposed such speeches. Thus in one of the articles in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* on the eve of a meeting at the Calcutta Town Hall to protest against the Municipal Bill it was suggested that the speeches should not be long and should be confined to the point. This had a very good result. The Hon'ble Mr. Ananda Charlu, who, as I have already said, was a great personal friend of Moti Lal, good-humouredly referred to this and said in the meeting :—

“One of your newspapers, the autocrat of the city of Calcutta, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, has told us in a leader this morning that the present is not an occasion for long speeches and that is a *fiat* which I have to bear in mind, as otherwise I might come in for a good castigation.”

But to return to the Municipal Bill. Sir John Woodburn, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal was determined to pass the Municipal Bill. In trying to destroy the representative character of the Calcutta Municipality Sir Alexander MacKenzie was simply carrying out the wishes of his late master Sir Ashley Eden. But before Sir Alexander MacKenzie could accomplish his task, fate drove him away from this country and he had to leave his pet measure to the fostering care of his successor Sir John Woodburn, who took up the task of carrying through this measure at the cost of his reputation simply to please his

predecessor. Sir John, said the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, was sacrificing himself for the sake of his predecessor. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* explained this by a funny story. Thus it wrote :

"This noble sacrifice reminds us of the hen-pecked King who had learnt the languages of beasts, birds, nay, of insects. Two ants were quarrelling over a grain of cooked rice which had fallen from the royal plate, and the high words that they exchanged elicited a smile from the lips of the King. For as stated above the lucky sovereign had got the gift of understanding the language of even insects. Seeing the smile on the royal lips his consort wanted to know the reason. Now, the King had acquired the gift under one awful condition, namely, that he must not disclose what he heard creatures speak, for, if he did so he would lose his life immediately. So, he could not explain to his wife the cause of his smile, for were he to do so he would forthwith fall down dead. He, therefore, begged to be excused, but the queen would not hear of any excuse, even when the King said that the penalty of the disclosure was to be the loss of his life. The Queen, not wholly believing this, said, 'Very good, I don't care. If you die, I don't mind. I must know the reason why you smiled.' The hen-pecked King seeing that he had no help in the matter, agreed to disclose everything. 'My dear', said he, 'if I die I must die, like a good Hindu, in the bosom of the Ganges, for my salvation. So come, follow me, let us go there.' Thus saying the King entered the sacred river, and the Queen stood on the bank to hear why the King had smiled.

"But just then a strange thing happened. An ewe and a ram were grazing on the bank, the former being in an advanced state of pregnancy. She saw a bundle of green grass being swept away by the current of the river and she requested her husband to fetch her the bundle as her tongue was watering for it. The ram said in reply that he did not venture to do so, for, he might be carried away by the current and drowned. But the wife would take no denial. She began to scold him in the bitterest terms, for his ungallantry, his heartlessness, his unmanliness and so forth. 'Why did you take a wife', said she, 'when you cannot satisfy her wishes?'

"The ram bore all the taunts of his wife with patience for some time, but at last he found that the more he submitted the sharper became the tongue of



his wife. So, he said, 'You see, wife, I am willing to do anything reasonable for you. But I am not a fool like that king who is sacrificing his life for the whims of his wife. That ass with a human shape has come to give his life. If he had only the sense to see that instead of sacrificing himself, he ought to have given his wife the cut of a horse-whip, she would have long ago desisted from tormenting him. Take note, wife, if you again tease me with such selfish and unfeeling requests, I will give you such a push with my horns that you will remember it all the days of your life.'

"The cwe seeing that her lord had assumed the natural position immediately gave in. The King, as we said, could understand the language of all animals and so he understood all that the ram told his wife. And a new light dawned on him. He came out of the river and let his wife know that he would not submit to her whims. Seeing the threatening attitude of the King the poor Queen fell at the feet of her husband and pitifully begged pardon of him. Since then she felt greater respect for the King than she had ever done before."

The above was a very favourite story of Moti Lal's and I have heard him narrate this on more than one occasion.

Now, what Sir John Woodburn was advised to do was to follow the example of the ram. He was by no means bound, said the *Patrika*, to sacrifice himself for the sake of Sir Alexander MacKenzie. But Sir John did not pay any heed to the advice. A series of meetings were held by the public protesting against the Bill, but the Government turned a deaf ear to them. Ultimately out of the fifty elected Commissioners 28 resigned their offices in a body, for, they had realised that when the MacKenzie Bill would be passed they would be divested of all their powers. Amongst those who resigned were Babus Bhupendra Nath Basu, Narendra Nath Sen, Radha Charan Pal, Srinath Dutt, Deva Prasad Sarbadhicari, Surendra Nath Banerjee, Ramtaran Bannerjee, Surendra Nath Roy, Raj Chunder Chunder, Kumar Manmatha Nath Mitra and others. The Bill was however passed in utter disregard of public opinion, a thing not at all unusual in Bengal.

In course of time the MacKenzie Act was found wanting and seventeen years after it had been passed, *i.e.*, in 1916 it was sought to be replaced by another Act, whose provisions were also considered to be halting by the public. A public meeting of the citizens of Calcutta was held in this connection in the Town Hall of Calcutta in January, 1916, to consider the proposed changes in the Constitution of the Calcutta Corporation. The Hon'ble Maharajadhiraj Bijay Chand Mahatab Bahadur of Burdwan, who took interest in public life in Bengal in those days, presided and the Hon'ble Raja Reshee Case Law moved the main resolution which ran as follows :—

That the office of the President of the Corporation should be separated from that of the head of the Municipal Executive and that both the President and the head of the Municipal Executive should be elected by Municipal Commissioners, the election of the latter, if the need be, being subject to confirmation by the Government.

That with a view to give the rate-payers an effective voice in the control of their Municipal affairs, at least three-fourths of the members of the Corporation should be elected by the different wards.

That the authority of the Corporation should be supreme and that all proceedings of the Executive and of Committees should be liable to revision by the Corporation as under the Acts of 1878 and 1888. As a necessary sequel the system of co-ordinate authorities should be done away with.

In support of this resolution Moti Lal spoke in his usual humorous vein as follows :—

“They were progressing very fast indeed in Municipal work ; they were progressing no doubt, but not upward but downward. Their progress could be likened to the progress of the cow's tail. The cow's tail goes down and not up. In 1876 they were fit to manage civic affairs. Forty years passed since then and they were now unfit. They all knew the story of the mouse being created a lion and then the lion again reduced to a mouse. They were once a lion, but now they are a mouse again, rather a dead mouse. They must, however, fight the battle. They should hold hundreds of meetings in Calcutta if necessary. They must exert all their

energy in getting back what they had and more than what they had."

The Bengal Act I of 1917 was passed into law in spite of popular opposition. But its span of life was very brief. It was repealed by the present Calcutta Municipal Act, Bengal Act III of 1923, which is considered to have conferred autonomy or self-government to the civic body. It is left to posterity to judge whether autonomy has been really conferred or not.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### FIGHT BETWEEN JOURNALISTS.

Differences Between Moti Lal And Surendra Nath—Some Defamation Cases—Kaliprasanna Kavya-Visharad Versus Ghose Family—Dina Nath Roy Versus Kavya-Visharad—Moti Lal Versus Kavya-Visharad—A Lesson For Journalists.

The disfranchisement of Dacca was hotly discussed in the Calcutta press towards the middle of 1899 and there was a regular quarrel over this matter among the press-magnates, which degenerated into personal recriminations and mutual fault findings, and the old differences between Moti Lal and Surendra Nath were revived.

The quarrel began in this way. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* vehemently opposed the disfranchisement of Dacca. As Babu Surendra Nath was the principal supporter of the disfranchisement the criticism of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* affected him and his followers at once flew into a rage. As the *Patrika* says :—

"This incensed his followers, two in number, who began, not to discuss the question, but to abuse us and call us thieves, liars and what not. While they were engaged in vilifying us in this way, Babu Surendra Nath began to pose as the much-injured simple man who was wronged by us, simply because we did not love him. Of course, we could not notice the abuse

levelled at us by the supporters of Babu Surendra Nath, for the simple reason that we are not dogs. But we warned him that such support will not help him, but injure him much more than it would injure us. The *Indian Nation* offered precisely the same advice to him, and so did the *Indian Empire*. We further assured Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea that we could have no personal motive in meddling with this question of disfranchisement, because we never aspired to the honour of a seat in the Council."

As a matter of fact Babu Moti Lal Ghose never attempted to have the honour of a seat in the Legislative Council. He always wanted to keep aloof of the Council Chamber. He explained this attitude by saying that he did not want to go to the Councils not because he had adopted the life of an ascetic, but because he felt that the only object of a man to go to the Council should be to be of service to his country. He felt that being in charge of a journal it was open to him to do as much good to his country as he desired to do. "That being so," said he, "for us to occupy a seat in the Council is to deprive a worthy man, who has no such opportunity of being useful to his country."

This was met by some of the friends of Babu Surendra Nath saying that "if Babu Moti Lal Ghose had stood against Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea he (Moti Lal) would have been nowhere."

The now defunct *Indian Empire* edited by Babu Amrita Krishna Mullick took up the cudgels on behalf of Babu Moti Lal Ghose and wrote as follows:—

"The organs of Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjea want to know the means of some of the gentlemen who would have proved formidable rivals to the Government nominee,—we mean Mr. Banerjea—if they had competed the Presidency Division seat with him. Now, if they had sought this information from some of the Municipalities in the Presidency Division they would have got the right answer immediately. For instance, the most important Municipality in the Division is the Cossipur-Chitpur and it commands the largest number of votes. All these votes were entirely at the disposal of Babu Moti Lal Ghose, if he had cared to stand for the

Presidency Division. As a matter of fact the majority of the Commissioners insisted on his coming forward as a candidate, but he would not. At the meeting of the Cossipur-Chitpur Municipality, held to elect a delegate, a Commissioner openly declared that he had gone to the Editor of the *Patrika* to request him to contest the Presidency Division seat, and, 'he had no doubt if Mr. Moti Lal Ghose, chose to stand as a candidate he would have got all the five votes at the disposal of the Cossipur-Chitpur Board, and he hoped that the Chairman would agree with him in the view.' We quote these words from the report of the proceedings of the meeting submitted to the Magistrate. Nobody contradicted the statement of the Commissioner and the Chairman would have never embodied it in his official report, if that were not the sense of the meeting. Now, backed by the biggest Municipality in the Division, would it have been really very difficult for Babu Moti Lal to oust Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee from the field in a fair fight. Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee has fallen and Babu Moti Lal has risen in public estimation ; it is thus reasonable to suppose that most of the Municipalities in the Division, like the Cossipur-Chitpur, would have declared for the latter, if he were early in the field, and if the former had not demoralised many of the constituencies by presenting himself to them as Sir John Woodburn's man .....Mr. Banerjee extorted pledges from many Municipalities, weeks before the Election Resolution was published in the *Calcutta Gazette* ; yet we think he would have found it very hard, though backed by the Government, to secure the seat, if Babu Moti Lal Ghose and for the matter of that, Mr. A. M. Bose, had made up their minds to contest the seat."

The newspapers and periodicals of the time were thus divided mainly into two groups, one supporting Moti Lal and criticising Surendra Nath and the other supporting Surendra Nath and criticising Moti Lal. Many of the writings in this connection were not only personal but scurrilous too and they showed to what depth of degradation journalism, one of the noblest of professions, may sometimes descend.

There was a crop of defamation cases against newspapers in 1898-99 in Calcutta. Other Provinces also had their shares. The *Standard* and the *Hindu* of Madras were in trouble during this period on account of defamation cases against them and

there was a case against the *Times of India* of Bombay in which Mr. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was the complainant. Defamation cases seem to be contagious, for, one case often brings about other cases, either in its trail or unconnected with it.

In Calcutta the curtain had hardly been rung down over the Brahmo lady defamation case and people had hardly been fed up with gossips about this unfortunate but interesting affair when three defamation cases came up in quick succession in which the proprietors of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and the *Hitabadi*, a vernacular weekly were implicated.

The first case was brought by Kali Prasanna Kavya-Visharad against Moti Lal Ghose and others, the second was brought by Dina Nath Roy, Assistant Manager, *Amrita Bazar Patrika* against Kali Prasanna Kavya-Visharad and others and the third was brought by Moti Lal Ghose against Kali Prasanna Kavya-Visharad.

Now, who was this Kali Prasanna Kavya-Visharad who figured in all the three cases? It is not known how or whence he got the title Kavya-Visharad. He belonged to the respectable Haldar family of Kalighat and was for some years a proof-reader in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* office and Assistant Secretary to the Indian Relief Society in which Moti Lal took a leading part. Subsequently he became the editor of the vernacular paper *Hitabadi* and became a very powerful writer, but his writings were often rather scurrilous and he often indulged in unsavoury personal attacks. He defamed the wife of a well-known Brahmo Professor of Calcutta in his paper and had to pay the penalty. He was sentenced to 9 months' imprisonment. But it seems this did not act as a corrective and he went on vilifying people in the same manner as before. He was a close follower of Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea and Babu Moti Lal Ghose was one of his targets. For 2 or 3 years Kavya-Visharad vilified Moti Lal through the columns of the *Hitabadi* to his heart's content. The matter at last came to a head and friends and well-wishers of Moti Lal advised him to sue Kali Prasanna for defamation. Kali Prasanna however anticipated him and brought a case for defamation against

Moti Lal in the Alipur Police Court before Moti Lal had taken any steps for suing him.

As soon as the proprietors of the *Patrika* came to learn that Kali Prasanna had brought a case against them the late Dina Nath Roy at their instance brought his case against Kali Prasanna and immediately after that Moti Lal also brought his case in court. These two cases were like a double-barrelled gun aimed at Kali Prasanna in order to make a sure shot.

•The case brought by Kali Prasanna arose in this way. Two articles headed "Why Bengali papers are unreadable" and "A Conference of Bengali-editors" had appeared in the *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, a vernacular weekly then owned by the proprietors of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, criticising the vernacular papers *Basumali* and *Hitabadi* for publishing scurrilous articles and thus degrading vernacular journalism in the eyes of the reading public. On the 1st September, i.e., only two days after the publication of the above Kali Prasanna Kavya-Visharad, who then edited the *Hitabadi*, filed a case for defamation against Babus Shishir Kumar Ghose, Moti Lal Ghose, Golap Lal Ghose, Mrinal Kanti Ghose and Piyush Kanti Ghose, alleging that they were editors and proprietors of the *Ananda Bazar Patrika* and also against the printer Babu Keshab Lal Roy. He complained that he had been defamed as a journalist by the publication of the aforesaid articles. Mr. P. L. Roy, Barrister-at-Law, who appeared for the Ghose family, in applying for their personal exemption from Court said :—

"The first-named petitioner (Babu Shishir Kumar Ghose) to the knowledge of the complainant (Kali Prasanna Kavya-Visharad), is in feeble health and is over 60 years of age and it is common knowledge that he has retired from all worldly affairs and is leading the life of a religious recluse at Deoghur. No man is more respected among all sections of the community for high character, profound learning and deep piety than Babu Shishir Kumar Ghose who has perhaps done more for the country than all our public men put together have been able to do. The second petitioner (Babu Moti Lal Ghose) who is well-known from the manner in which he is conducting the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*,

is also in indifferent health. The fourth petitioner (Babu Piyush Kanti Ghose) is a student reading for the B.A., examination in the Metropolitan College and he has no connection with any paper."

The Ghose family was of course allowed to appear by agents. Kali Prasanna Kavya-Visharad then tried to have search-warrants issued for the original copies and proof-sheets of the articles, but the Magistrate did not grant his prayer.

In the meantime the defamation case referred to above was instituted by Babu Dina Nath Roy, Assistant Manager, *Amrita Bazar Patrika* against Babus Upendra Nath Sen and Debendra Nath Sen, Proprietors of *Hitabadi*, Kali Prasanna Kavya-Visharad, editor and Aswini Kumar Haldar, printer of the *Hitabadi* in the Sealdah Police Court. Dina Babu's grievance was that the *Hitabadi* had defamed him by falsely and maliciously publishing that he had given false evidence in a case at Saugor.

Moti Lal brought his case against Kali Prasanna, as he said, not on private ground only, but on public grounds as well ; for, Kali Prasanna through the columns of the *Hitabadi*, according to him, was libelling people right and left.

The first charge against Kavya-Visharad was with regard to a case at Kalighat known as Golab Roy's temple case. *Hitabadi* charged Moti Lal with having taken money from Golab Roy for supporting him in a quarrel over a temple that arose between Golab Roy on the one hand and certain people known as Chetties on the other side. As a matter of fact Moti Lal and Golab Roy were strangers and he supported Golab Roy's case not for money, but because he found the case to be just. The real fact is that in supporting the Chetties who opposed Golab Roy's constructing a temple of Radha-Krishna at Kalighat Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea had spoken about the Hindu gods and goddesses in the Calcutta Corporation in a manner which was taken exception to by Hindus. Moti Lal's articles were written more with a view to criticising Surendra Nath for thus speaking about Hindu gods and goddesses than with a view to supporting Golab Roy.



The second charge against Kavya-Visharad was that with the pretext of correcting some mistakes appearing in a paper called *Power and Guardian* he had through the columns of the *Hitabadi* circulated the false and libellous statement that Babu Moti Lal Ghose had misappropriated the sum of Rs. 500 paid by Raja Jogendra Nath Roy Bahadur of Natore to the Congress. The fact is that this money was not paid to the Congress, but to some other association for which it was meant. As Moti Lal said in his evidence before the Magistrate:—

“There is a British Committee (of the Congress). This is in England. The Committee’s finances are raised in this country.

“Messrs. Bradlaugh, Digby, W. C. Bonnerjee and I started the Indian Political Agency. The British Committee only countenances or advocates what the Indian National Congress takes up and nothing more. The Indian Political Agency aimed at taking up other questions affecting individuals. The Agency was maintained by subscriptions raised here from among private friends. Rajah Jogendra Nath Roy Bahadur is a friend of mine. I wrote to him to contribute to the Indian Political Agency fund and his late Dewan Babu Girish Chandra Lahiri sent me Rs. 500 in currency notes with a letter which I have lost. It was given in 1888 or 1889. Neither the Indian National Congress nor the British Committee of the Congress had anything to do with this money. I sent the Rs. 500 to Mr. Digby.”

The third charge against Kavya-Visharad was that he had published in the *Hitabadi* an article about the election of Babu Baikuntha Nath Sen, Vakil, of Berhampur to a seat in the Bengal Legislative Council in which it was falsely and maliciously stated that Moti Lal had been at first secretly working against Baikuntha Nath by writing letters and sending round a protege of his named Satya Charan, but latterly either through fear of Baikuntha Nath or through affection for him, Moti Lal did not scruple to cancel his previous letters and write letters of a different character. It was also stated that Moti Lal had borrowed Rs. 2,000 from the Kasimbazar Raj with which Babu Baikuntha Nath was thickly connected, and Moti Lal supported him only in order to avoid being dragged into Court for this money.

Babus Golab Roy and Baikuntha Nath Sen and some other witnesses were examined who supported Babu Moti Lal Ghose's evidence and proved that the allegations against him were false.

On the 22nd of December, 1899, Mr. T. A. Pearson, Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta, committed Kali Prasanna Kavya-Visharad to the Calcutta High Court Sessions to take his trial there.

In the meantime the other two cases, at Alipur and Sealdah went on, and some witnesses were examined.

Ultimately, however, through the intervention of common friends all the three cases were compromised on honourable terms. Moti Lal was very unwilling to compromise, but he was forced to do so by his friend Bhupendra Nath Basu, who wrote to the editor of the *Hitabadi* in course of a letter asking him to publish an apology :

“You know how very unwilling Moti Babu was to settle, we had literally to force it upon him.”

Journalists ought to take a lesson from this fight between *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and *Hitabadi*. Pleaders in court fight each other, but the moment a case is over and they are out of court, they are friends again. Parliamentarians also do the same thing. Why should not the journalists follow a similar course? If they have to fight they ought to do so through the columns of their respective papers. The Press is the Fourth Estate of the realm, and those in charge of the Press should remember that by rushing to court they lower the dignity of the Press. As a rule when criticising each other they ought to keep within the bounds of law as much as practicable. It is, however, not always possible to do so and hence minor transgressions on either side are inevitable and as such they ought to be overlooked. Unless there is a flagrant defamation, which is repeated again and again a journalist ought not to go to court against a brother journalist. Men living in glass houses should not throw stones at one another.

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## CHAPTER XX

### MORE QUARRELS AMONG JOURNALISTS

Provincial Conference at Bhagalpur (1900)—Criticism Leads to Quarrels  
—A Suit that was never Brought—Surendra Nath versus Moti Lal.

The Bengal Provincial Conference was held at Bhagalpur towards the beginning of the year 1900. It was very severely criticised by Babu Moti Lal Ghose in the columns of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. He had all along wanted to make the provincial conferences more democratic and less confined to orators and editors. The Bhagalpur Conference, he wrote, was a failure in this respect. This was followed by a bitter attack on Moti Lal in the leading columns of the *Bengalee* and the *Basumati*, and for a pretty long time the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and the *Bengalee*, which had then become a daily paper, were seen exchanging shots at each other. Much of the criticism on either side, it must be said with regret, was personal and has perhaps no interest for posterity. Vigorous attempts were made at this time by the proprietors of some rival journals to annihilate the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. As a matter of fact they formed an association for the purpose and began vilifying the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and its editor Babu Moti Lal Ghose right and left.

Commenting on the situation the *Indian Nation*, now defunct, observed :—

“There is a regular tug-of-war, for, there is no doubt that Greek has met Greek. Two mighty patriots, veterans both in the art of agitation, have been flying at each other's throat and there is no doubt that they are terribly in earnest.”

Wrote the *Indian Empire*, also now defunct, in reply :—

“An impression has been sought to be created that there was a free fight between the *Patrika* and the papers noted above. We must aver that the idea is absolutely false. The *Patrika* has not exchanged hot words with any or all of them. It is precluded from

doing so because of the position it occupies. Personalities it can never descend to. It has to be on the defensive. We therefore take exception to the remark of the *Indian Nation*. . . . . Our contemporary must have noticed with pain and humiliation the libellous attacks of the *Bengalee* and its personal abuses of Babu Moti Lal Ghose for some time past. We ask him to point out a single instance of an exchange of abuse in the *Patrika*."

Throughout the year shots were thus exchanged not only between Moti Lal and Surendra Nath but also between their lieutenants. I may mention in this connection the name of Babu Amrita Krishna Mullick, Vakil, Small Causes Court of Calcutta who then edited the *Indian Empire* and firmly supported Babu Moti Lal Ghose in his quarrels with Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea. Subsequently the relationship between Moti Lal and Babu Amrita Krishna developed into a very sweet one and I shall have occasion to refer to this.

In December 1900 the following editorial paragraph appeared in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*:—

"We said that the declaration of Lord Curzon, namely, that he liked to be judged by his works, is an excellent security for his good behaviour. The *Pioneer* has furnished another such security by his attack. We are glad to see that the Indian papers universally have accorded their support to the Viceroy. . . . . It is true the *Bengalee* supported the *Pioneer* in the beginning but we are glad to see that it corrected its mistake afterwards. Indeed, an alliance of the Indian journals with such a paper as the *Pioneer* is impossible. Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea in an unguarded moment formed an alliance with that paper in urging the Government to pass the Press Message Bill. He was then subscribing to Reuter's telegrams and he no doubt thought that if the measure was passed he would secure an advantage for his paper over most other Indian journals. If he had however succeeded no paper would have suffered more than his own, if the statement were true that he had ceased subscribing to Reuter. Indeed, by joining with the *Pioneer* on that occasion he was not only led to injure the interests of all other Indian papers but also to lay a knife across his own throat . . . . ."

On the appearance of the above paragraph in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea consulted his

lawyers and sent a Solicitor's letter to Babu Moti Lal Ghose in which he said that the publication of the above paragraph harmed his "reputation as a journalist" and he called upon the editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* to "retract the statements," offer him a "suitable apology" and "publish the same" in the editorial columns of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.

The Solicitor's letter was also published in the columns of the *Bengalee*, then edited by Surendra Nath Banerjea, with the following remarks:—

"The *Patrika* has for some time past been persistently trying to injure us by giving currency to the false report that we do not subscribe to Reuter's telegrams. It has done so in its correspondence columns, and the same falsehood now finds place in its editorial paragraph. But falsehood never pays in the world."

Commenting on the above the *Indian Nation* wrote a paragraph which will be of great interest to the journalists:—

"The *Patrika* in one of its issues:—'He (Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjea) was then subscribing to Reuter's telegrams, and he no doubt thought that if the measure (the Press Message Bill) were passed he would secure an advantage for his paper over most other Indian journals. If he had however succeeded no paper would have suffered more than his own, if the statement were true that he had ceased subscribing to Reuter.' Immediately after this the Hon'ble Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjea instructed Babu Bhupendra Nath Basu as his Attorney to write a letter to the Editor of the *Patrika*, demanding an apology and an withdrawal of the statements made. We always knew Mr. Banerjea to be the reverse of thin-skinned, and we are much surprised at this display of sensitiveness. Do not all of us including Mr. Banerjea write like this? 'Mr. X is reported by a correspondent to have made an unwarrantable assault upon a post office peon, snatched his letter bag and forced it open. The charge is a serious one if it is true and ought to be inquired into.' Mr. X would not, we believe, take any action for defamation with regard to the statement if it is false. If it is true it would not be prudent to take any action. Well now, when the *Patrika* says, 'if the statement were true,' should the statement be received in any other light than that against Mr. X in the hypothetical case? Surely a proposition with an 'if' is not an affirmation, and if it exposes the news-

paper to all the risks of a categorical statement none of us will be safe in publishing any sort of a report or rumour which contains anything in the nature of an accusation."

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, however, declined to make an apology to Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea and in doing so wrote :—

"Our paragraph is not susceptible of the construction put upon it by Babu Surendra Nath. We are used to virulent attacks, every week, all the year round, by a vernacular paper, the editor of which is a warm supporter of Babu Surendra Nath and his paper. But the method one journal taking legal proceedings against another is a more serious affair and was unknown in Indian journalism. It was, however, for the first time inaugurated by the friend of Babu Surendra Nath alluded to above, in regard to our journal; and on the present occasion he, Babu Surendra Nath himself, has come forward with an Attorney's letter to us. Such conduct on the part of a journalist has the effect of demoralising the whole press and setting an example which is suicidal. Surely 'Babu Surendra Nath cannot blame a journalist if he, feeling aggrieved by his conduct, should follow the example set by himself and his friend, and take legal proceedings against them. And such an incident is not unlikely. 'People living in a glass house should not pelt stones at others' is an English proverb. We have, however, a more expressive one, namely, 'a man being drowned in a well of his own digging.'"

Fortunately, however, good counsel prevailed and the matter did not go to court. To quote the *Patrika* "the *Bengalee* announced to the world with a flourish of trumpet that all the differences between Babu Moti Lal Ghose and Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea had been made up." But it is well-known that the truce between Moti Lal and Surendra Nath was only a temporary one.

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## CHAPTER XXI

### ROAD CESS AND PUBLIC WORKS CESS

Bengal Provincial Conference of 1901—Moti Lal's Speech on Road Cess and P. W. Cess—Unequal Distribution of Collection Costs—Sir Edward Baker's Reply—Moti Lal's Hopes Realised.

The Bengal Provincial Conference was held at Midnapur in May, 1901. In this session Moti Lal moved the following resolution :—

“That this Conference is of opinion that the Government should be moved to take steps that the money realised on account of the Road Cess may not be spent for any purposes other than those for which it was originally levied, namely,

(1) the construction and maintenance of village roads and local paths,

(2) the sinking and improving of wells, tanks and other works of irrigation affecting comparatively small areas of land and other similar purposes, so that the benefits to be derived from the road cess may be brought home to the cess payers' doors and may be palpable, direct and immediate.

“That with a view to secure the above objects the District Boards be directed to keep a separate account of Road Cess funds showing for what purposes the same are spent.

“That this Conference specially begs to draw the attention of the Government to the fact that the charges for maintaining the joint establishment for realising the Road and Public Work Cesses should be borne equally by the Boards and the Government respectively.”

In moving the resolution Moti Lal delivered a lengthy speech in course of which he traced the history of the imposition of the Road Cess. He said that when the Road Cess was sought to be imposed there was some difficulty because it was thought to be a flagrant violation of the pledge given to the Zemindars of Bengal by the Permanent Settlement of 1793. But this difficulty was overcome by giving an assurance that the money realised by the imposition of this Cess would belong

not to the Government but to the people themselves and the entire proceeds from this cess would be placed at their disposal. This was clearly mentioned in the Despatch of the Duke of Argyll as Secretary of State for India and reiterated by Sir George Campbell who said in his proclamation :—

“The Road Cess money shall be distributed and spent by local men trusted by the inhabitants who shall be selected or elected for the purpose.”

But alas, all these pledges were subsequently violated. Sir Ashley Eden showed the way by passing a “law” in 1880 enacting that the objects of the Road Cess were other than those for which it was originally imposed and in 1895 Mr. Risley Secretary to the Government declared that no such thing as the Road Cess Fund existed and money raised through the Road Cess might “legally” be spent on any purpose according to the sweet will of the Government.

Through the Press and the Platform Moti Lal agitated for years for the return of the people’s money to them and for the fulfilment of the pledges given by the Duke of Argyll when the Road Cess was first imposed.

As early as 1889, if not earlier, we find the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* taking up the question of the collection of the Road Cess and the Public Works Cess. At that time both these cesses were collected by the same establishment. The collection charges therefore should have been borne equally by both the departments. But the Government had fixed the ratio at two-third and one-third between the Road Cess department and the Public Works Department. This was done apparently because the Government took the Public Works Cess to be its own, while the proceeds of the Road Cess, which were in the hands of the District Boards belonged to the people. At least that was what the people contended. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* urged that this alleged wrong which began as early as 1879 should be removed by making both the departments share equally the establishment charges.

The matter was brought to the notice of Sir Edward Baker,



then Finance Secretary to the Government of Bengal, through a series of articles in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. Sir Edward gave a reply during the Budget discussion in the Bengal Council in April, 1899. He spoke *ex tempore*, very rapidly, but in a rather low voice, so that the reporter of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* could not catch all of what he had said and brought only a summary of the speech to Moti Lal which was so condensed as to be almost unintelligible. Moti Lal thereupon wrote to Sir Edward Baker requesting him to be so good as to supply him with a copy of his speech. In reply Sir Edward said that he could not comply with his request as he had neither a copy nor any notes of his speech. He was however good enough to revise the report prepared by the reporter of the *Patrika* and this was published in the *Patrika*. Sir Edward gave the Government view of the question ; he admitted that the Government had accepted the principle of paying one-third of the cost, "but it was ordered that in order to avoid a fresh adjustment every year a fixed lump sum should be assigned to each district and paid every year." "As regards the proposal that Government should pay one-half the charges and not only one-third," Sir Edward continued to say, "that is what the Government actually did. It undertook to pay one-half the gross charges including the cost of the superior supervising staff, and that is in effect paying one-third of the direct joint charges *plus* the cost of the superior staff." Sir Edward thus did not see his way to accept the contention of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and act upto it.

Moti Lal now wrote a private letter to Sir Edward Baker earnestly soliciting his careful attention to the subject. In reply Sir Edward said that he had kept his mind perfectly open and if he were convinced of the correctness of the position taken up by Moti Lal he would do his best to help him in the matter. After this there was some correspondence between the two and in course of a year Moti Lal's hopes were realised—in place of the fixed sum of Rs. 46,800 the grant of the year 1900-01 was raised to Rs. 1,04,000 that is by Rs. 57,200:

Babu Ananda Mohan Bose who was then a Member of the Council wrote in a letter on the subject :—

“I am delighted to see the Government has decided at length to bear its fair share. . . . This means a gain of about Rs. 60,000 per annum to the District Boards. Our thanks are due to the Government of Sir John Woodburn and to the Hon'ble Mr. Baker in particular but they are also due to the *Patrika* for the very effective manner in which it has agitated this important question and drawn public attention to it.”

Like the Road Cess question the question of rural water supply was another matter for the improvement of which Moti Lal devoted much of his time and energy. I shall have occasion to refer to his activities in this connection later on.

## CHAPTER XXII

### DEFAMATION CASE AGAINST MOTILAL

Trial of a “White” Cooly Emigration Agent—Incorrect Report in *Patrika* and Other Papers—Moti Lal Tried for Defamation—His Defence—Conviction by Magistrate—Press Comments on the Conviction—Observations of the *Maharatta* and the *Hindu*—Acquitted By High Court—*Statesman's* Comments on the Case.

A very sensational criminal case that took place at Allahabad in the year 1901 was what was then known as the Hoff case. In this case one B. E. Hoff, a cooly emigration agent of Cawnpur and two of his men were charged with having robbed a Marwari woman named Ram Piyari of her gold ornaments and sent her adrift penniless after having detained her at the cooly depot for seven or eight days. They were tried at the sessions at the Allahabad High Court and after ten days' hearing the jury who were all Englishmen acquitted them, six being in favour of acquittal and three in favour of conviction. The Judge Mr. Justice Aikman agreed with the minority but curiously enough did not order a retrial on the ground that experience had shown him that a retrial would have a similar result and would also cause inconvenience

to witnesses. The case formed the subject matter of comment in almost all the leading papers, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* being no exception. It commented on the case in its usual sarcastic style. After analysing the judgment critically the *Patrika* observed:—"Or, in other words, his Lordship means that a European jury will never convict a European accused, so it is useless to order a retrial."

In an issue of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of some date before the actual hearing of the case a report had appeared in the telegram columns where it was stated that the woman had brought three charges against Hoff—of wrongful confinement, robbery and outrage. As a matter of fact however there was no charge of outrage and the *Pioneer* of Allahabad published a paragraph stating that there was no such charge. As soon as the attention of the conductors of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was drawn to it "they expressed their regret for having unwillingly done Mr. Hoff any injury by the publication of the said report." The *Bengalee* and some other papers had also published a similar report of outrage by Hoff. Hoff was not satisfied with the expression of regret and brought a case against the correspondent of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* at Cawnpur, who settled the case by offering apology to Hoff and paying him a compensation of Rs. 500. The *Panch Bahadur*, a vernacular paper of Bombay, which had also published a similar news and had been threatened by Hoff with prosecution compromised the matter by paying him Rs. 500. So the case instead of being a curse to Hoff became a boon to him.

Naturally temptation grew and Hoff now proceeded against Moti Lal Ghose as Editor and Ashu Tosh Dey as Printer of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. He instituted a criminal case for defamation against them in the Joint Magistrate's Court at Cawnpur in May 1901 and in course of a fortnight or so had the following notice served on Moti Lal:—

"Sir, my client Mr. B. F. Hoff has just filed a case against you under Sections 500-109 I. P. C. for defaming him in a most scandalous and unjustifiable manner in the issue of your paper dated 26th April 1901 headed

a 'Shocking Case'. The case is fixed for 29th instant in the Joint Magistrate's Court.

Besides the above proceedings I may mention that my client intends suing you for heavy damages which he assesses at one lakh of rupees. You can take this as a notice before going to Court. Unless this amount is paid up by the end of the month the matter will be forthwith put into Court.

Yours, etc.,

(Sd.) Alfred Harrison,  
Advocate, H. C., N. W.<sup>o</sup> P.  
Counsel for Mr. B. E. Hoff."

When the criminal case against Moti Lal was taken up at Cawnpur the redoubtable Kali Prasanna Kavya-Visharad, whose sole aim in life for some years seemed to have been to lay Moti Lal low, ran all the way from Calcutta to Cawnpur with a view to prove Moti Lal's editorship of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*; but in doing so he got himself entangled in a case under Section 174 I. P. C. Moti Lal in his written statement before the Magistrate admitted that "he was the editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, that he wrote the leaders and the leaderettes and that he had nothing to do with the other portions of the paper such as telegrams, correspondence, reprints, selections, etc."

Mr. Wallach, Barrister-at-law, who defended Moti Lal, pointed out that great caution had been taken by the authorities of the *Patrika* in publishing the news in question which was done in absolute good faith and with proper care and after due enquiry. He contended that the *London Times* could not be more careful. He also pointed out that it was proved by evidence that when the matter complained of was published Moti Lal was not in Calcutta but was in his native village Magura (Amrita Bazar). This was proved by a post card written from Magura and bearing the post mark dated 24th April in which an employee of Moti Lal wrote to another employee of his at Calcutta "that Moti Lal was to leave Magura at midday of 25th arriving in Calcutta in the evening and that his carriage should be sent to the Sealdah station to

receive him." No responsibility could be attached to the editor, said Mr. Wallach, unless he was the writer and publisher. But Mr. A. P. Charles, the trying Magistrate, was imbued with the traditions of the class he belonged to. He did not believe that Moti Lal was absent from Calcutta at the time of the publication in question, because all his witnesses were *Kayasthas*. He convicted Moti Lal under Section 500 I. P. C. and sentenced him to pay a fine of Rs. 1,000, the highest fine that the law empowered the trying Magistrate to inflict, half of which was to be paid to Hoff for expenses incurred in the case. The Printer was acquitted.

A similar case was brought by Mr. Hoff against Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee, Editor of the *Bengalee* for publishing a similar paragraph. Surendra Babu also pleaded *alibi* and counsel for Hoff did not press the case against him so much. Surendra Nath was more fortunate than Moti Lal. In his case the Magistrate, the same Magistrate who tried the case against Moti Lal, believed that at the time the offending paragraph was published he was at Simultala and not in Calcutta, and thus let him off.

The conviction of Babu Moti Lal Ghose on such a flimsy ground made the Indian press furious and many of them strongly commented on the judgment of the trying Magistrate. One paper dwelt on the difficulty of conducting daily newspapers if such *bona fide* mistakes were to be penalised, another referred to the ignorance of law on the part of the trying Magistrate, another went one step further and said that personal bias could override all evidence in a Mofussil Court and so forth and so on. I cannot resist the temptation of quoting *in extenso* the comment of the *Maharatta*, which, I believe, was then edited by Mr. Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Said the *Maharatta* :—

"Babu Moti Lal Ghose, the famous editor of the *A. B. Patrika*, will have, we have no doubt, the sympathy of the whole Indian public in the failure he lately was unfortunate enough to sustain in contesting the case for defamation instituted against him by

Mr. Hoff, a planter's agent who lately passed the ordeal of a sessions trial on very serious charges and was acquitted by a majority of jury of his countrymen. Babu Moti Lal was fined Rs. 1,000 by the trying Magistrate whose judgment shows that he was prejudiced against the former. The case is *sub judice*, waiting the decision of an Appellate Court ; and so we do not wish to comment upon the merits of the case. But we take the opportunity to say that Babu Moti Lal who has spent his whole life in righting the wrong, befriending the oppressed, and exposing the frauds, the humbugs, the snobs in the society as well as in the political administration of this country, hardly needs to be told that an adverse judgment of an Anglo-Indian Magistrate against him, is a thing quite expected by the world. It is a small reverse which only serves to heighten the merits of the life of self-sacrifice which he is leading as a true patriot. The public estimation in which he is held will be only increased by the recent event and the whole Indian public share the feelings and sentiments of his Jubbulpore admirers, for instance, who the other day gave him splendid ovations when he had been to that place."

The *Hindu* of Madras remarked that the way in which the Magistrate had disposed of the plea of *alibi*

"did not present the Magistrate as an ideal judicial officer. This great judicial dignitary has not even the common courtesy to put 'Mr.' before the name of the accused gentleman though he mentions it frequently in his judgment. A Joint Magistrate is not after all such a superior person that he need dispense with the common courtesies observed among gentlemen and in his relation to the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* his superior air could only be of momentary duration."

It may be observed in passing that this peculiar habit of omitting 'Mr.' or 'Babu' from the names of respectable Indian gentlemen, who may have the misfortune to be in the position of an accused in a criminal case or may be parties to or witnesses in a civil suit or criminal case, is not peculiar to the lower courts only, but the highest judiciary in the land has sometimes been found to be lacking in this common courtesy. One has only to search some law-reports to find cases where any Tom, Dick or Harry has been honoured with the appellation of 'Mr.', but highly respectable Indian gentle-

men have been deprived of the title of 'Mr.' or the more unambitious, but certainly not less respectable, 'Babu'.

An appeal was of course preferred against the Magistrate's judgment to the Court of the Sessions Judge at Cawnpur. Babu Satya Charan Mukherjee, an eminent Vakil of the Allahabad High Court, argued the appeal on behalf of Moti Lal. He spoke eloquently and feelingly for three hours and his address made a deep impression on those who heard him. Mr. H. Dupernex the Sessions Judge in acquitting Moti Lal held that the publication of the alleged libellous matter at Cawnpur had not been *strictly* proved. Moreover, he believed in Moti Lal's plea of *alibi* which was rejected by the trying Magistrate on a very flimsy ground. According to the state of law then in force an editor would not have been liable for any publication in his paper if it could be shown that at the time of the publication he was absent from office and had left the paper in charge of a competent person. Since there has, however, been a great change in the law and at the time of writing this (1934), an editor's name has to be printed in every issue of the paper and I do not think he can escape liability by proving *alibi*.

The judgment of the Sessions Judge was received with jubilation by the Indian press and Moti Lal's acquittal afforded one more opportunity to them to make a lashing criticism of the trying Magistrate. Even the *Statesman* of Calcutta said :—

"The reasoning of the Joint Magistrate (in disbelieving the plea of *alibi*), to say nothing of the impertinence of the phrasology employed by him, is, indeed, so palpably perverse, as to cast considerable doubt on his judicial capacity."

In this connection the *Statesman* of November 3, 1901 came out with an article forcibly criticising the provision of law which enabled any one who may feel himself aggrieved by any publication in a newspaper to choose his forum in any remotest corner of the country and punish the editor of

the paper extra-judicially by dragging him to that place. The *Statesman* concluded by saying that

“justice, commonsense and public policy alike require that a suit for libel against a newspaper should lie only in the jurisdiction in which the place of business of the paper is situated.”

We do not know if the *Statesman* still holds the same view, but the law has not been changed and justice, commonsense and public policy seem to have been thrown into the Ganges water.

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## CHAPTER XXIII

### FROM A WRITER TO A SPEAKER

Reception At Jubbulpur—At Madras—Entertainments In His Honour.

From Cawnpur where Moti Lal had to go in connection with the Hoff Case in the year 1901, he went on a casual visit to Jubbulpur where his eldest sister Srimati Sthir Saudamini was living with his son the late Tarit Kanti Buxy, M.A., Professor of Chemistry, Robertson College. Sthir Saudamini was an exceptionally intelligent and highly cultured lady. She used to spend the summers mostly in Calcutta with her brothers and now that it was winter and she was at Jubbulpur Moti Lal thought that he would have some rest there and recover from the strain of a day to day working life. He went there *incognito* with the intention of passing a few days quietly and aloof from the public gaze. But his presence was soon discovered by some of the leading members of the local society headed by Rai Bahadur Ballava Rao, a public-spirited local millionaire, who at once called on him. Very soon a public reception in honour of Moti Lal was arranged at the bungalow of Mr. Ganesh Vasudeo Sane, another patriotic and public-spirited gentleman. Long before the appointed hour Mr. Sane's house was packed to the full and Moti Lal was loudly cheered when he arrived. Moti Lal who had a dread



of speechifications had agreed to come to the party only on condition that there would be no speeches. But the enthusiasm of the assembled gentlemen was so intense that one of them stood up and delivered an *ex tempore* address of welcome. This was more than Moti Lal had anticipated. But he had no other alternative than to reply. He began by saying that he was not prepared for the mine of surprise that had been sprung upon him in the shape of the welcome address that had been given to him. His friends knew that he did not like to open his lips before the public, he was only a writer and not a speaking machine, and so forth and so on. In spite of his not being an orator he delivered a lengthy speech mostly dwelling on the financial condition of the people. He deplored the gradual disappearance of the higher classes of people and enjoined on them to live a strictly economical life. "If you earn Rs. 50 a month," he said, "spend Rs. 40 and save at least Rs. 10."

The audience were greatly impressed to hear him speak. He did not assume the theatrical attitude that many speakers adopt, but he spoke in a perfectly natural way and every sentence that he uttered went home to the hearts of his hearers ; indeed, his speech was heard with rapt attention and the unanimous verdict was that it was "as enthralling as it was useful and practical."

From the place of Mr. Sane Moti Lal was conducted to the Oriental Club where he was entertained with light refreshment and music and introduced to all the leading men of the station. It had some how or other oozed out that Moti Lal could sing very well and he was pressed so hard by his newly-acquired friends that he had to yield. When he had ceased singing a gentleman remarked that it was they who had come to entertain Babu Moti Lal Ghose but instead of their entertaining him it was their guest who had entertained them with delicious music.

The Bengali gentlemen of Jubbulpur and the local Madrasi community also arranged parties for him. He could stay at Jubbulpur for a short time only. He had gone there with the

object of finding a little rest but he got parties and public receptions in stead.

Eleven years later when Moti Lal went to Madras he was given a similar reception. Various sections of the Indian community of Madras held entertainments in his honour. He was given a hearty welcome not only as the editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* but also as the delegate of the Bengal Government to the All-India Sanitary Conference, a curious combination indeed. On the evening of November 16, 1912 a large number of zemindars headed by the Hon'ble the Rajah of Kuruppam, the Rajah of Tuni, the Rajah of Jodporle, the Rajah of Tiruvur, the Rajah of Bhadrachellam and such leading members of the Indian community as the Hon'ble Mr. T. V. Seshagiri Iyer, Mr. S. Kasturiranga Iyengar, editor and proprietor of the *Hindu*, and Mr. K. V. Rangaswami Iyengar of Trichinopoli held a party in honour of Moti Lal at the house of the Rajah of Tiruvur where he was entertained with music and refreshments were provided for the gentlemen present. They thanked Moti Lal for his eminent public services and he in his turn appealed to the zemindars to take their position as natural leaders of the people and serve their motherland to the best of their abilities.

On the morning of the 19th November the Madras Cosmopolitan Club entertained him to a social gathering where many leading members of the Indian society were present. They had also provided music and refreshments for the honoured guest. The gentlemen present having expressed their wish to know something of the late Governor of Madras Moti Lal told them how popular Lord Carmichael had already been in Bengal and how His Excellency had assured him that Lord Pentland would also prove a good and noble-minded governor. Babu Moti Lal Ghose was then garlanded and photographed with the members present and the gathering dispersed.

The same afternoon Babu Moti Lal Ghose was entertained by the members of the Pachayappas High School Literary Society where he made a little speech to the young men present

advising them to lead a good life and also to learn to love God. Here also there were music, recitation and refreshments after which the gathering terminated with the ceremony of garlanding Babu Moti Lal Ghose.

In the evening of the same day the Madras Mahajana Sabha held a party in honour of Babu Moti Lal Ghose and Rai Bahadur Ganga Prasad Varma. Mr. T. Rangachariar, a leading vakil welcomed the guest in a neat speech in which he enumerated some of the immense services which the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* had done to the country. Moti Lal made a suitable reply in the course of which he said that he had always sought to work from behind and that he would take the liberty of giving the advice to the younger generation that they should always try to serve their country by extinguishing their self as much as possible ; for, it was then only that God would bless their efforts with success.

Here I have given at random some instances of receptions held in honour of Babu Moti Lal. There were numberless such receptions held from time to time at different places and if they were described in detail they alone would have filled up this volume.

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## CHAPTER XXIV

### TWO COMMISSIONS

#### University and Police Reforms

Recommendations of the University Commission—Stress on Secondary at the Cost of Primary Education—Popular Protest—Police Commission—Moti Lal Gagged—His Written Statement on Police Reforms—His Scheme—Wanted Separation of Police and Magistracy—How A Magistrate May Be A Real Blessing To The Country—Alternative Schemes—Divest Magistrates of Judicial Powers—Opinion of the Bar on Moti Lal's Written Statement—Separation of Judicial and Executive Functions.

In August 1902 the University Commission submitted its report. The recommendations clearly wanted to take away the control of the popular element from the Universities and

officialise them. Sir Guru Das Bannerji, a Judge of the Calcutta High Court, who was one of the members of the Commission was opposed to the recommendations of the majority and he appended a learned note of dissent to that effect. The majority of the Commissioners laid special stress on secondary education at the cost of primary education and this was considered objectionable by all who had the interest of the children of the soil at their heart. At the same time the Commissioners recommended an enhancement of College fees which meant a closing of the doors of higher education against poorer boys. It was suggested in Indian circles that Lord Curzon had supplied the points and the Commission had only elaborated them. He had succeeded in placing the Calcutta Municipal Corporation under official control and it was now his desire to transfer the control of the Calcutta University from the hands of non-official Indians to official Englishmen.

Immediately after the report of the University Commission had been published a public meeting was held at the Town Hall in Calcutta protesting against its recommendations. The enthusiasm displayed at the meeting which was attended by students in large numbers showed that young Bengal was no longer prepared to take things lying down but was trying to raise its head.

When the agitation over the reactionary recommendations of the University Commission were still going on another Commission was holding its sittings—the Indian Police Commission. The Hon'ble Mr. Fraser, I.C.S. (afterwards Lieutenant Governor of Bengal) presided over the Commission which was composed of two Indian and six British members.

The Police Commission examined a large number of witnesses in Calcutta in November, 1902. Most of them, however, were British members of the services, there being only a sprinkling of non-official Indian gentlemen. Amongst the Indian witnesses were Raja Peary Mohan Mukherjee, Raja Kissori Lal Gossain, Mr. A. Chaudhuri, Barrister, Mr. R. C. Dutt, I.C.S. and others. Moti Lal who had submitted written

replies to the questions sent to him by the Commission was to have been examined. But the public who were anxiously looking forward to his examination were not a little surprised when on the last day of the Calcutta session of the Commission its President declared that Babu Moti Lal Ghose's written replies were "clear and explicit and it was therefore unnecessary to examine him orally."

Commenting on the personnel of the Commission the Calcutta correspondent of the *Hindu* had written to that paper :—

"The editor of the *Patrika* would have been the right man as Bengal's representative member on the Police Commission . . . . . That the Government feared to appoint a people's man as a member of the Commission is a circumstance that naturally gives rise to misgivings."

It may now very well be understood that people were looking forward to his evidence with some interest. As a matter of fact on the 22nd November, 1902 Moti Lal got the following letter from the Police Commission :—

"DEAR SIR,

The Police Commission having perused your replies to the questions desire to examine you orally and I am to invite you to attend for that purpose at noon on November 25th at the Council Chamber in Writers Buildings."

But two days afterwards he got another letter which countermanded the request contained in the previous letter. It ran as follows :—

"DEAR SIR,

Upon further consideration of your replies to the questions issued by the Police Commission, the President and Members are of opinion that your answers are sufficiently clear and explicit and that it is not necessary to ask you to appear for oral examination in order to elucidate your views. They will not trouble you therefore to attend tomorrow as requested in my letter of the 22nd instant."

It soon became known to the public that "Babu Moti Lal was the only witness who would not be orally examined" and anxious enquiries began to be made of him as to why he was thus singularly treated. People formed their own conclusions. Some were of opinion that the object of leaving him out of cross-examination was simply to spoil the effect of his written evidence, leaving it to be construed that he preferred discretion to valour and dared not face the cross-examination of the Commissioners and therefore failed to turn up. Others held quite a different view. They were of opinion that the Commissioners feared many ugly disclosures and therefore avoided him. They held that Moti Lal should have pressed his claim of being cross-examined. The President of the Commission however declared that Babu Moti Lal Ghose was not orally examined because it was not necessary as his written statements were "sufficiently clear and explicit." Whatever might have been the reason Moti Lal was practically gagged and that at the eleventh hour.

In his written answers to the questions sent to him Moti Lal had drawn a scheme of Police reform. In the first place he had suggested a separation of the Police and the Magistracy—the Magistrates might maintain their judicial powers but they should give up the control of the Police. "The main defect in the constitution," he had said, "is the union of the Police and the Magistracy ; and what is needed is a separation of the two. The District Magistrate is the head of the District Police and thus there is a very intimate relation between the two. The result is that the Police supports the Magistrate and the Magistrate supports the Police." He had then narrated how Deputy Magistrates were influenced by the Superintendents of Police through the District Magistrates, on whom depended the promotion of the Deputy Magistrates. He had also cited some concrete cases amongst which mention may be made of the case of Babu (afterwards Rai Bahadur) Atul Chandra Chatterjee, Deputy Magistrate, who had incurred the displeasure of the Government of Sir Charles Elliot for his quarrel with the Police Superintendent and the Magistrate of Backer-

gunje for having refused to convict certain men sent up by the Police—an incident which had formed the subject matter of an interpellation in Parliament.

In his written statement Moti Lal had also described in his inimitable way how a Magistrate might be a real blessing to the country if he were relieved of Police duties. He had written :—

“What a world of good the District Officer might do if he were relieved of his Police duties! He is the *ma bab* of the District ; yet the people rarely see him. He might travel from village to village and help the inhabitants in one hundred and one ways. He might preach peace and good will to them. He might ask them to give up litigation and live in friendly terms with one another. He might teach them how they should improve their agriculture and save their decaying industries. The ignorant villagers know not many of the ordinary sanitary laws. He might instruct them how they should preserve their health. Malaria and Cholera are often times produced by the drinking of foul water. He might make the inhabitants of every village in his jurisdiction excavate a tank at their own cost and keep it separate and unsoiled for drinking purposes only. The ryots often cannot sell the produce of their land at a profit for want of good markets. He might create these markets for them. Big houses ruin themselves by litigation. The Magistrate might intervene and save many such houses. Indeed, the Magistrate has enough of good work in his district. Let him give up the Police and earn the gratitude of lakhs of people entrusted to his care by improving their condition—material, intellectual and moral. In this way he will not only earn the fervent gratitude of his district people but make himself far happier than he now is, by helping the Police, no doubt unconsciously, to send both guilty and innocent men to jail.”

Moti Lal had given alternative schemes also. If his first suggestion as to the complete separation of the Police and the Magistracy could not be accepted then the Magistrate might retain the control of the Police but should be divested of his judicial powers and the Sub-Divisional Magistrates and other subordinate Magistrates possessing judicial powers should be placed under the District and the Sessions Judge. As a third

alternative he had also suggested the appointment of Magistrates with first class powers to try "only police cases," who should be not under the official control of the District Magistrate but should be under the control of the District and the Sessions Judge.

As regards the then existing method of investigation of cases Moti Lal had suggested that investigation should be conducted, as a rule, by a better class of officers and it should be impressed upon them that "it is far better that crimes should remain undetected than that innocent men are harassed."

In his written statement Moti Lal had also dwelt largely on the duties of the Chowkidars—he had described how they abused their power and position and he had also suggested what reforms were needed so far as the village police were concerned. If the separation of the Judicial and the Executive functions could be introduced in the mofussil as it had been done in the case of Calcutta much improvement, Moti Lal was of opinion, might be made in the mofussil Police system.

Space does not permit us to give in full the evidence of Moti Lal before the Police Commission. Regarding this evidence "A well-known member of the Calcutta Bar" wrote as follows to the *Indian Daily News* :—

- "With regard to the minutes submitted to the Police Commission by our worthy townsman and veteran journalist, Babu Moti Lal Ghose, and published in all the important newspapers of this city, I have had on several occasions, conversations with some of the leaders of the Calcutta Bar, and all of them, specially one European Barrister who is justly noted for his independence, are of opinion that those minutes are *the best ever said or written on the subject of Police Reform*, and deserve the consideration of every body interested in the matter. I think it is my duty to inform you, and through you the public, what is thought of those minutes by those who are impartial and fully competent to pass an opinion on the subjects dealt with by the minutes."

Moti Lal's scheme of Police Reforms which could be carried out without any appreciable change, was supported by the *Englishman* on the one hand and such stalwarts as Mr. Romesh Chunder Dutt, I.C.S., Raja Peary Mohan Mukherjee and Rai



Bahadur Atul Chandra Chatterjee (who had formerly been on the Provincial Service) on the other hand. But things have not much improved since then. Many of the suggestions that Moti Lal made in his memorandum to the Police Commission may with profit be yet carried out.

This was not the only occasion when the question of separation of the Executive and the Judicial functions had been mooted by Moti Lal. Indeed he had long been harping on this subject and had never lost an opportunity of giving publicity through his paper to the numerous injustices done to the innocent people owing to the union of these two functions in the Magistracy. Off and on when he got the opportunity he advocated the separation of these functions from the platform also.

To take an instance at random. A crowded meeting of Hindus and Mahomedans was held at the Town Hall of Calcutta on Friday the 18th April, 1913 to consider the question of the separation of the Judicial and the Executive functions in India. The meeting was thoroughly representative, the audience consisting of members of the legal profession, zemindars, teachers, merchants, etc. A large number of Mahomedans also attended the meeting and several of them took part in its deliberations. Among senior European members of the Bar Messrs. Hardly Norton and St. John Stephens joined the meeting. Dr. Rash Behari Ghose, the veteran jurist, presided. Amongst the speakers were Messrs. Byomcase Chuckerbutty, Barrister ; Moti Lal Ghose ; Abdul Rasul, Barrister ; J. N. Roy, Barrister ; Pravash Chunder Mitter, Vakil (afterwards Member of the Executive Council of the Governor of Bengal) ; Fazl-ul-Huq ; J. Chaudhury, Barrister ; C. R. Das, Barrister ; Surendra Nath Bannerjea ; Rai Yatindra Nath Chaudhury and others.

The Hon'ble Mr. Byomcase Chuckerbutty moved the first resolution of the meeting which ran as follows :—

“That in view of the urgency of the reforms and the definite pledge given by Sir Harvey Adamson as Home Member that the Government of India have decided to advance cautiously and tentatively towards the separation of judicial and executive functions in those parts

of India where the local conditions were favourable this meeting urges the Government speedily to carry out this much-needed reform."

Moti Lal seconded this resolution. In course of his rather lengthy speech he quoted the following words of Rai Atul Chandra Chatterjee Bahadur, a distinguished retired Deputy Magistrate, who in his evidence before the Police Commission had said :—

"Rightly or wrongly the subordinate Magistracy labour under the impression, which is largely shared by the general public and to which, in many instances, colour is given by injudicious action on the part of the District Police Superintendents, that they would please the District Magistrate by convicting and displease him by acquitting in police cases or where acquittal was impossible by pursuing a 'laissez faire' policy in respect of the misdeeds or shortcomings of the police as disclosed by the evidence."

Moti Lal also quoted Mr. R. C. Dutt's observations on similar lines and then said :—

"The impression on the public mind is that, as a general rule, a subordinate Magistrate cannot hold the balance of justice even when he has to try a case sent by the Police; for, he may thereby offend the District Magistrate, the head of the Police, and injure his future prospects."

Moti Lal suggested that

- "a Magistrate with first class powers should be specially set apart, both at district and sub-divisional head-quarters, for the purpose of trying *only police cases* and be placed under the District Magistrate having no official connection whatever with him."

If the series of leading articles that were published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* from time to time are published in a book form the case for the separation of the judicial and the executive functions which unfortunately has not yet been effected will undoubtedly receive a great impetus.

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## CHAPTER XXV

### MOTI LAL AND THE "SUPERIOR PURZON".

Lord Curzon's Convocation Speech—His Lecture on Journalism—*Patrika's* reply—Curious Interviews—With Lord Curzon and Sir Walter Lawrence—The Korean Lie—*Patrika's* Scoop—Press Comments—Protest Meetings.

Though a life-long opponent of the Government Moti Lal was on intimate terms with many individual Government officials. But there was no love lost between him and Lord Curzon. Lord Curzon's improvements upon the Calcutta Municipal Bill, which officialised the Calcutta Corporation, and his educational policy, by which he tried to officialise the Calcutta University were severely criticised in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. Lord Curzon smarted under the criticism and the Convocation of the Calcutta University in February, 1902 gave him an opportunity to vent his spleen. To the young graduates present there he read a lecture on journalism and specially on the "Native Press", which he characterised as something which cannot be depended upon and which made foolish exaggerations. He asked the would-be journalists amongst the audience not to impute motives and be sparing in their invectives against the Government, etc., etc., as if the "Native Press" were always engaged in doing these.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* at once took up the gauntlet and wrote :—

"Lord Curzon began by stating that he wanted to teach ; and he based his claims as a teacher, not upon the fact of his being the Chancellor but that he is past forty and therefore competent to teach. In India fifty-five, however, is the age which entitles a man to pose as a sage."

It may be said in passing that Moti Lal was now exactly fifty-five years old.

Just as the Viceroy had read a lecture on journalism the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* also read a lecture on "What a Viceroy

should or should not do!" In course of a leading article on the subject it wrote:—

"First of all, as the Viceroy of India represents Emperor Edward, Lord Curzon ought to have four eyes, two before and two behind.

"Talking of eyes, the Viceroy, whoever he may be, should never use spectacles. If he has jaundice, he should try to conquer it, the Viceregal throne is no place for one with jaundice.

"As hostile criticism, however bitter, or a lampoon or a satire or sarcasm does not carry murder with it, Lord Curzon as the ruler of an alien race which has no votes and no representatives in the Government machinery, should welcome it and not try to suppress it either by material or moral force."

As was usual with the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* it wrote article after article bantering the Viceroy's Convocation speech. For a pretty long time the readers enjoyed these but the authorities only smarted.

But Lord Curzon was a shrewd politician. Hence, though the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* attacked his policy so very fiercely, he valued the opinion of Moti Lal. There was, however, no direct and personal meeting between Moti Lal and Lord Curzon. Indeed, Moti Lal never came face to face with His Lordship, who, to quote Moti Lal, was "too superior a purzon to talk directly with a plebian like him." Lord Curzon granted interviews only to a few Rajas and Maharajas. He would not meet even Sir Chunder Madhav Ghose, though a Judge of the High Court. It is said that the only occasion when they met they quarrelled and Sir Chunder Madhav never again crossed the threshold of the Government House so long it was in the possession of Lord Curzon.

Though Moti Lal and Lord Curzon never met each other Lord Curzon now and then sent for Moti Lal and conversed with him from behind a *purdah* through his Private Secretary. Moti Lal has left descriptions of such interviews from which I take the following. His Lordship, says Moti Lal, was in the audience hall and Moti Lal sat with the Private Secretary in the latter's room. The Private Secretary carried his

message either spoken or written to His Excellency and His Excellency in his turn sent back his replies generally in words to his visitor sitting only a few yards away from him, only a *pardah*, more correctly speaking a wall intervening between them.

Lord Curzon was on the eve of his departure for East Bengal to discuss the partition question with its people. His mind, as he said, was still open on the subject and he had sent for Moti Lal to ascertain his views about the partition. But let the story be told in Moti Lal's own language:—

“Sir Walter Lawrence had then left the Viceroy and either Colonel Pinheor or a Civilian was his Private Secretary. The Private Secretary took down the points on a slip of paper which he carried to the All-High and the latter sent back replies to each of them in pencil writing. Two of these points may be mentioned here. One was that His Excellency should make no difference between Hindu and Mussalman leaders of East Bengal, that if he dined at the place of the Nawab of Dacca, he should also show the same honour to the Maharajah of Mymensingh. ‘Yes’, was the reply. Another point was that it would be impossible for Bengal to find money for the maintenance of two separate Governments if it were divided. The reply was to the effect, ‘Mr. Ghose need not trouble himself about the cost. My Government has enough money in its coffer to meet it.’”

But alas, Lord Curzon did not listen to the sane advice of Babu Moti Lal Ghose, whose prophecy was fulfilled to the letter. For, one of the main reasons for the annulment of the Partition of Bengal was the fact that the East Bengal Government proved a veritable white elephant to the Government of India.

Moti Lal was on very intimate terms with Sir Walter Lawrence, Private Secretary to Lord Curzon and the two would often meet at the Government House. In his book “The India We Served” Sir Walter has left descriptions of their meetings. He has described Moti Lal as the “frail, fiery, but most attractive editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.” Writes Sir Walter:—

“I used to have long talks with him when I was with Lord Curzon, and he once told me how the

Bengalis were a brave, manly people, addicted to deeds of violence. He spoke almost with tears in his voice of their skill as highway robbers, of the songs which were written of the Robin Hoods of Bengal. 'And now you twit us as unmanly and unwarlike, and you say that there is not a single Bengali in the Indian Army!' Then he would impress on me the fact that the British had got into India on the shoulders of the Bengali. 'Who were the right-hand men of Warren Hastings and the old Governors? Who did your work of penetration in the North-West and the Punjab—nay, even to Kabul? And then when you had overrun the North-West and the Punjab, you threw off your old friends, the Bengali, and took to your hearts the Northerners. Look at that map of yours on the wall, showing the spread of education, and I will point out one simple fact to you. Bengal shows the greatest spread and your map grows lighter, and the Punjab is the lightest of all. Study the colour and you will see this, that misery, peculation and corruption follow the Provinces as they are shaded, and you have deserted your old friends, the honest and honourable Bengalis, whom you call *Babus*, and gone to Provinces where education is only beginning and where corruption is rampant.' "

In another place of the same book he writes:—

"Once a great Indian publicist, who used to pay me surreptitious visits in Calcutta (his influence with his people would be gone if it had been known that he had been inside the Government House), was talking to me about the great question of Home Rule of India. He had a genuine admiration for Lord Curzon, for his justice, strength and energy; he dreaded his craving for efficiency; for, said this most interesting and patriotic Hindu, 'Every step in efficiency is another rivet in the shackles in which we are bound. We do not ask for Home Rule now, nor in ten years, nor in twenty: but all we ask is that he will not shut the door of hope on us. Ask him to say that perhaps in fifty years India may be self-governing.' I was so moved by the sincerity and eloquence of his words that I went into the next room, where Lord Curzon passed his days and long hours of his nights, and told him of my friend's plea. He listened with attention, for he had a high opinion of my visitor, who owned and edited the best Indian paper of that time. After long thought the Viceroy said: 'No I will say nothing, for it might embarrass my successor if I raised any hopes or

expressed any opinion as to when self-government will come.' I urged that it must come some day, and that it seemed cruel to close the door of hope. But Lord Curzon replied: 'It will not come in my time, and I cannot say what may happen in the future.' So I returned to my friend and told him that the oracle was dumb."

The oracle, however, spoke at last—but long afterwards and when feelings had been embittered. A declaration by Lord Curzon that Home Rule was India's goal and that she would get it in fifty years might have calmed the Indian unrest to some extent. Later official declarations have named the goal, but the time limit is yet to be fixed.

Lord Curzon's speech as Chancellor of the Calcutta University delivered on Saturday the 11th February, 1905 fell like a bomb-shell on the elite of Calcutta who had assembled to hear him at the annual Convocation of the Calcutta University. It created a sensation among the Indian public. But a greater sensation was created throughout the whole of India when, two days afterwards, that is on Monday the 13th February the following appeared in the editorial columns of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*:—

# "LORD CURZON IN VARIOUS CAPACITIES.

AS CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA.

*Address in Convocation.*

February 11, 1905.

"Untruthfulness consists in saying or doing anything that gives an erroneous impression either of one's own character or of other people's conduct or of the facts and incidents of life. . . . .

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"I say that the highest ideal of truth is to a large extent a Western conception. . . . .

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"Undoubtedly truth took a high place in the moral codes of the West before it had been similarly honoured in the East. . . . .

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"Flattery may be either honest or dishonest. Whichever it be, you should avoid it. If it is the former it is nevertheless false, if it is the latter it is vile. . . . ."

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"FROM 'PROBLEMS OF THE EAST.'"

BY GEORGE N. CURZON—Pp. 155—156.

"Before proceeding to the royal audience, I enjoyed an interview with the President of the Korean foreign office . . . . I remember some of his questions and answers. Having been particularly warned not to admit to him that I was only thirty-three years old, an age to which no respect attaches in Korea, when he put to me the straight question (invariably first in an Oriental dialogue), 'How old are you?' I unhesitatingly responded 'Forty.' 'Dear me,' he said, 'You look very young for that. How do you account for it?' 'By the fact,' I replied, 'that I have been travelling for a month in the superb climate of His Majesty's dominions.' Finally . . . he said to me, 'I presume you are a near relative of Her Majesty the Queen of England.' 'No,' I replied, 'I am not.' But observing the look of disgust that passed over his countenance, I was fain to add, 'I am, however, as yet an unmarried man,' with which unscrupulous suggestion I completely regained the old gentleman's favour."

After quoting the above passages the *Patrika* said that this latter passage containing the interview of Lord Curzon with the President of the Korean Foreign Office had been discreetly omitted from the then last edition of the "Problems of the East," a book written by Lord Curzon, though it had appeared in the first edition.

The above extracts along with the editorial notes thereon created a sensation among the reading public not only of this country but of other countries as well.

The *Statesman* characterised it as "the most delightful comment upon Lord Curzon's speech on the occasion of the Convocation."

In a private letter a distinguished English gentleman wrote to Moti Lal, "I feel I must congratulate you upon your magnificent 'scoop' about Lord Curzon and Western sincerity."



A great sensation was caused even in England. Another gentleman wrote as follows from England :—

“The *Westminster Gazette* observed that the appearance of the ‘clever retort’ in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* caused an instant change in the public temper. The whole of India shook with laughter. Something like a similar result was produced in England. The most pronounced supporters of the Viceroy had to admit that Lord Curzon had been fully answered and that by a native paper. Hundreds of newspapers took notice of the paragraph and most of them in a spirit of sympathy ; and, for two days the Viceroy’s attack on the Indian character and the clever retort of the native paper formed the chief topic of conversation in England.”

The then London correspondent of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (probably Mrs. Annie A. Smith) congratulating Moti Lal wrote :—

“Congratulations, Mr. Editor, on the distinction ably and smartly won by the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in so completely turning the tables on the Viceroy when he launched his cruel indictment against the people of India with regard to truthfulness. No more effective way could have been devised of exposing the fallacy that the highest ideal of truth is a western conception than that which the *Patrika* so cleverly took up, namely, to convict the Viceroy himself of the sin he denounced so strongly in Orientals. It was a happy thought, and smartly carried out, and has brought the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* to the notice of thousands and thousands of readers of British newspapers. Many of your contemporaries here have referred to the convincing way in which you dealt with the Viceroy’s remarks and your ‘clever retort’ is admitted by all, even by those most devoted to extolling the wonders of your wonderful Viceroy.”

The *Daily News*, the *Morning Leader*, the *Daily Mail*, the *St. James’ Gazette* and many other papers quoted the Korean incident from the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and admitted that it was really a ‘clever retort.’

One of the most amusing paragraphs appeared in the *Weekly Times* of 12th March, 1905. It quoted the Korean incident as published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and remarked that Lord Curzon’s “admiration for truth was perhaps acquired

later on in life, under his wife's management. It is pre-eminently a Yankee quality." The article in the *Weekly Times* concluded with the following verse:—

"Oh, it sticks in the gorge  
Of truthful George,  
Likewise Na-than-i-el,  
That the nigger beast  
Of the wily East  
Should taradiddles tell.

"For this 'man without guile'  
Went many a mile,  
In the days of candid youth ;  
And always did well,  
Taking care to tell  
Naught but the naked truth.

"That is, you all know,  
What seemed to him so,  
Or likely to pass as such.  
If a little white lie  
You boggle at, fie!  
He was only talking Dutch !"

Lord Curzon's observations created a stir throughout the country and a monster public meeting was held at the Town Hall of Calcutta presided over by Dr. Rash Behari Ghose, the eminent jurist, emphatically protesting against the aspersions cast upon the character of the people of India and upon their sacred literature by the Viceroy in his address before the Calcutta University Convocation. Moti Lal took a leading part in organising this meeting. The Calcutta correspondent of the Bombay paper *Times of India* wrote to that paper that "the Town Hall protest meeting was organised by Moti Lal Ghose, Surendra Nath Banerjea and Narendra Nath Sen" and wanted to minimise the importance of the meeting by comparing it with the activities of the famous "three tailors of the Tooley Street." Moti Lal replied by saying that it did not matter whether the meeting was organised by three or three hundred men, the pick of the Indian community responded to the call.

Following in the wake of Calcutta a meeting was held at the Victoria Town Hall, Madras towards the end of March, 1905. The gathering was very large, perhaps unprecedented in the town of Madras. Mr. N. Subba Rao took the chair and amongst others a resolution protesting against Lord Curzon's "unfounded reflections cast upon Indian characters and sacred literature" was passed.

Men in high position ought to be very careful about what they say and write. They ought to remember that their writings and utterances, unlike those of a man of straw, are closely watched and followed by the people. Unfortunately, however, the history of the present administration in India discloses that highly-placed men have not always been as cautious as they ought to have been and this has only resulted in embittering racial feelings.

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## CHAPTER XXVI

### BEARDING THE LION IN HIS DEN

Sir Edward Baker and Moti Lal—The Ruler and the Ruled—Is the *Patrika* Seditious?—Sir Edward's Opinion—Moti Lal's Protest—Deportation Order against Motilal Cancelled.

Though Moti Lal was one of the popular leaders in Bengal and always criticised the Government unsparingly, he was held in esteem by almost all the rulers of the Province who knew him personally. He was on friendly terms with many of them. But he was rather thick and thin with Sir Edward Baker, even before he had become Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. It may be said here that from Sir George Campbell to Sir Richard Temple all the rulers of Bengal, with the exception of Sir Richard Temple and Sir Stuart Bayley, were hostile to the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. In the beginning of his term of office Sir Andrew Fraser showed some regard for Moti Lal, but afterwards he became his sworn enemy on account of the active and prominent part he took in the

Swadeshi movement. To his successor Sir Edward Baker he left a disagreeable legacy. It was to carry out the deportation order with regard to some of the leaders of Bengal including Moti Lal. When Sir Edward assumed office as Lieutenant Governor Moti Lal had gone to Deoghur in the Southal Parganas for a change of air, where he used to go almost twice a year. One morning he was startled to hear the news that Babu Aswini Kumar Dutt and some other leaders of Bengal had been arrested and deported. Moti Lal was anxiously waiting for his turn when instead of a warrant he received a letter from his friend Sir Rameshwar Singh, the late Maharaja Bahadur of Durbhanga, asking him to come down to Calcutta and see the Lieutenant Governor as early as possible.

When Moti Lal came back to Calcutta the Private Secretary to the Lieutenant Governor wrote to him appointing an interview and he duly saw the Lieutenant Governor. Now, Sir Edward was in very good humour at this time and by his quaint way of putting things Moti Lal made him several times laugh very vociferously. Moti Lal then asked him more in joke than in earnest if what he wrote in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was seditious. But let me quote the following from Moti Lal's private diary :—

"When I asked him if the writings in the *Patrika* were seditious or what, his face brightened up, and with a wicked smile in his face, he replied, 'Well, well, you have done well by broaching this subject. I shall frankly give you my opinion. No one has been a more studious reader of your paper for the last two decades or more than I, and in my opinion, its policy is that of Lord Randolph Churchill, who when in opposition, would oppose Government whether it did a bad thing or a good thing. Oppose, oppose, oppose was the rule with him. The *Patrika* would similarly oppose Government whether it did a good or a bad thing. And your writings show that you regard us as so many unwelcome interlopers and that the sooner we leave the country the better for you. The *Patrika*, I fancy, has very little love for the Government.' And he seemed to be very merry over his own remarks.

"I replied, 'I strongly protest against what you say. I shall prove in a few words that Your Honour's

observation is unwarranted. I freely admit that the *Patrika* has several defects, but it is not a donkey. You say it opposes even when Government confers a boon. That is the work of a donkey. We can praise as well as censure. If we censure as a rule it is because you give us so few opportunities to praise! And, Sir Edward, are you not on a higher platform than we? Have you any idea of our sufferings? No, none whatever I submit. For you are in the position of a ruler and we that of the ruled. You are to command and we are to obey implicitly. And, suppose, we from a sense of wrong, real or imaginary, say or write something which we should not, have you not a little bit of generosity in you to forgive us for the same, considering our unhappy position? Your opinion is that what we write in the *Patrika* is sedition, and my prayer is that when you find it necessary to hand us up for this offence give us some time so that we may make our last will.'

"Sir Edward's face became very small. He stammered out apologetically that that was the impression made in him after reading the *Patrika* for years together. 'As for making your last will,' he said smilingly, 'I shall give you ample time for it.' I pointed out to him that he being an official and we a severe critic of the Government it is very natural that he should form that kind of opinion. But if he can forget his prejudices he will find that the *Patrika* is not such a bad paper as he thinks."

It required great strength of mind for a man of Moti Lal's position against whom a deportation order was pending to speak to Sir Edward Baker in the way he had done. It is an open secret that Sir Edward struck off the names of Moti Lal Ghose and Surendra Nath Banerjea from the list of deportees which Sir Andrew Fraser had left for him.

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## CHAPTER XXVII

### PARTITION OF BENGAL

Effects of English Education—Awakening of Patriotism—Lord Curzon's Partition Scheme—Country Thrown into a Conflagration—Extremists and Moderates—*Patrika* Office, the Citadel of Extremists—Moti Lal's Extremist Friends.

From 1906 to 1908 Bengal was passing through a troublous time. The troubles started with the Partition of Bengal. English education and the teachings of European history and particularly British history had opened new vistas to our educated youngmen. Those who had travelled abroad and had tasted the sweets of freedom in other countries brought with them new ideas and ideals and were saturated with a new life. They felt themselves in India like birds who were "cribbed, cabined and confined" and wanted to break the bars of the iron cage of dependence that shut them in. They were quickened to a new spirit of freedom and patriotism and their contagion soon spread far and near. The whole of India and more specially Bengal was surcharged with a deep feeling of humiliation and resentment at her political subjugation. She was like a store house of gunpowder and a spark was only needed to set her on fire. Lord Curzon supplied the spark to this storehouse of gunpowder. It was his Partition of Bengal which threw the country into a great conflagration. A general patriotic ferment was already seething in our schools and colleges, when the policy, acts and utterances of the "Superior purzon" drove practically the whole country into an open defiance of these. The demagogues began to throw their invectives at the Government of the day from all sorts of platforms ; and the Press took up their trenchant pen to prove that their weapon was mightier than the sword. Students of the schools and the colleges, especially the younger ones, 'fell an easy victim to their teachings. Patriotism which

was hitherto almost limited to the arm-chair politicians began to be practical and men learned to suffer for their country. Regardless of consequences they took up the cry of *Bande Mataram* or "Mother, I bow to thee," mother being symbolical for the motherland. The student community learned to impose upon themselves self-denying ordinances, such as fasting or going about with bare-foot on special days, attending political meetings, joining processions and singing national and patriotic songs in the public streets and meeting places in violation of official orders. They were persecuted, but persecution only whetted their appetite for freedom.

The Province of Bengal as it stood during the days of the earlier Lieutenant Governors consisted of Bengal, Behar, Orissa, Chota Nagpur and Assam, by far too large a territory for one administrative head. So, as early as 1874 Assam was separated from Bengal and placed under a Chief-Commissioner.

Lord Curzon, who has been described and must have considered himself as a "Superior Purzon" came, to India as Viceroy and Governor-General in December 1898. It is said that he had the map of Bengal constantly before his eyes. He found that a national consciousness was awakening in Bengal. The writings of Bankim Chandra and Vivekananda were producing their effect on the literary mind of the Bengali speaking race, and the newspapers conducted by Indian owners by their day to day appeals were drawing men away from other fields to the political one. The solidarity of Bengal at such a time was certainly not a very desirable thing for those who wanted to lord it over Bengal. Here were two sections of the population of Bengal, the Hindus and the Mahomedans who might with advantage be set against each other. No doubt the Province of Bengal was big ; but surely there were other ways of managing it than by dividing it into two halves in such a way that the two communities would be constantly fighting with each other. But Lord Curzon did not find any utility in such ways. The proposal to divide Bengal was at first confined to the taking away of the Chittagong Division and the districts of Dacca and Mymensingh from Bengal and

tacking them on to Assam which had been separated long ago. The volume of protest against this form of separation of Bengal was so intense that Government could not ignore it ; but instead of improving matters Government proposed a change which only worsened the situation. Lord Curzon consulted the Mahomedans of East Bengal headed by the Nawab of Dacca and improved his plan by including the whole of Dacca Division and the six districts of North Bengal in the new Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam.

The Partition scheme was disclosed to the public by a Government Notification in July, 1905. It was to come into operation on the 14th of October, corresponding to the 30th Aswin. Hence it is that the 30th of Aswin was for years celebrated as the Day of *Rakhibandhan*, on which date Hindus and Moslems of West Bengal and East Bengal tied a coloured chord (called the *Rakhi* in Bengali) to one another's wrist thereby signifying that they would not be separated from one another but would tie themselves with the bond of love and affection even if the Government wanted to separate them.

There was a storm of protest against the proposed Partition. The best brains of Bengal regarded the administrative convenience as a ruse only—and they held, rightly or wrongly, that Lord Curzon's motive behind this Partition was to set the Hindus and the Mahomedans against each other.

Meetings were held in almost every village protesting against this measure. And the agitation by no means kept itself confined to the four walls of Bengal. It soon became an all-India question and other provinces sympathised with Bengal in her trouble. The policy of the powers that be was condemned from a thousand platforms. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and other nationalist papers began to write from day to day exposing what they deemed to be the evils that would be brought about if the Partition Scheme were adhered to. People who had never before cared to take interest in politics lost their sleep and appetite and wanted the Partition to be annulled. They would find no rest till the Partition which had been described by Mr. Morley as a "settled fact" had



been made "unsettled." In their eagerness they sought for an organisation from where they might with one voice express their resentment and demand an amendment of the Partition. In the Indian National Congress they found such an organisation. The Congress which had uptill now been regarded by many people as being a plaything in the hands of a few holiday-makers now attracted their attention and they wanted to make it expressive of the real will of the people. Hitherto the "Moderate" leaders had been conducting the Congress; the "Extremists" now wanted to have it under their control with a view to making it a weapon for fighting the Partition. In Bengal Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea, then editor of the *Bengalee* was the leader of the Moderates, and Babu Moti Lal Ghose, editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was the leader of the Extremists. It may be remarked in passing that the two parties led by these gentlemen never called themselves Moderates or Extremists. As was rightly observed by S. J. Robindra Nath Tagore in 1908 "the distinction between Extremist and Moderate is not of our making—it is the Britisher's black mark which draws the line, and we know not always when and where it is placed, or for what purpose." But then though the party led by Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea did not relish the idea of being called "Moderates" yet it delighted in calling the party led by Babu Moti Lal Ghose as "Extremist." Similarly though Moti Lal's party was not willing to be called "Extremist" it had a peculiar satisfaction in dubbing Surendra Nath's party as "Moderate."

While men like Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea, Bhupendra Nath Basu, Krishna Kumar Mitter, Ambika Charan Mazumdar, Kishori Mohan Choudhury, etc., composed the Moderate Party in Bengal, the Extremist Party was composed of men like Babu Moti Lal Ghose, Mr. Byomkesh Chuckerbarty, Babu Hirendra Nath Datta, Rai Yatindra Nath Choudhury and others.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* office at 2, Ananda Chatterji Lane became the citadel of the Extremist Party. Meetings, formal or informal, were held here from time to time and not

to speak of the political leaders of Bengal, the great political leaders of other provinces did not consider their visit to Calcutta of any use to them if they did not see Moti Lal in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* office. The great Maharatta leader Bal Gangadhar Tilak made the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* office his Calcutta residence. On many occasions when he came to Calcutta he used to put up with Moti Lal. In a verandah on the ground floor of the outer house Tilak cooked his food himself and slept in the same room with Moti Lal. Some times they even shared the same bed. Tilak's Maharatti slippers with the big curl in front and Khaparde's twenty-two yards long turban were objects of admiration to the little boys of the family—nephews and grandsons of Moti Lal Ghose. Sj. Aurobindo Ghose's curled hair, Sj. Bipin Chandra Pal's stentorian voice, Sj. Panchkari Banerji's biting wit and last, but not the least of all, Lala Lajput Rai's lion-like head did not fail to impress the urchins of the family including the writer. Rai Yatindra Nath Choudhury and Babu Hirendra Nath Datta, and last but not the least Babu Amrita Krishna Mullick were familiar every day figures at the *Patrika* office. If at a stated time in the afternoon a figure loomed large at the corridor of the *Patrika* office where Moti Lal generally used to sit and write for his paper the chances were ten to one that you could say without seeing the person of the figure that it was no other than that of Rai Yatindra Nath Chaudhury of Baranagore, a great personal friend of Moti Lal whom he loved as dearly as his brother and who in his turn reciprocated it. If it was late in the night and his near and dear ones were awaiting Moti Lal's home-coming it was sure that he could be found closetted with Babu Hirendra Nath Datta in the latter's house at Cornwallis Street. Babu Amrita Krishna Mullick, Vakil, Small Cause Court, Calcutta was another of Moti Lal's intimate friends with whom he would have his constitutionals at the Ganges' side or at the Hedua (Cornwallis Square). Moti Lal, Hirendra Nath and Amrita Krishna formed a trio and I, who have been closely associated with Moti Lal ever since my childhood, found Moti Lal keeping company with these two

gentlemen more than with any other man. I have often wondered what was the common tie that bound this trio—an Editor of a newspaper, a Solicitor of the Calcutta High Court and a Vakil of the Small Causes Court of Calcutta! Perhaps, love of the motherland.

To return to my narrative, Moti Lal was one of the guiding spirits of the agitation against the Partition of Bengal. Just as leaders came in streams to the *Patrika* office to take their inspiration from him, processionists singing national songs made it a point to make the *Patrika* office one of their halting places. The white-bearded Moulavi Leakut Hossain who captivated the heart of the student community in those days would daily attend the *Patrika* office simply for the sake of attending it. The series of articles on the Partition of Bengal that were published in the *Patrika* from time to time produced an electric effect on the popular mind. I have been told by a person who happened to be a hero of several platforms in those days that he committed these articles to memory and his *extempore* speeches in connection with the national movement were nothing but reproductions of what appeared in the editorial columns of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. This gentleman did what many other demagogues also did at the time. Thousands were thus permeated with the ideas preached by Moti Lal through the columns of his paper, and kept on the agitation against the Partition of Bengal till it was annulled.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII

### KING GEORGE'S VISIT TO INDIA INTERVIEW WITH MOTILAL

Sir Henry Cotton's Disclosure—Moti Lal's Description of the Interview  
—A Novel Way of Reception—Sympathy of the Rulers Wanted.

King Emperor George V, during his visit to India as Prince of Wales was graciously pleased to grant an interview to Moti Lal in Calcutta in the beginning of January,

1906. The incident was sought to be kept a secret ; indeed, except a few intimate friends nobody knew anything about it. Sir Henry Cotton, however, got the information somehow or other and in his Bengal Partition speech delivered in Parliament thus referred to the matter :—

“A gentleman whose name would be unknown to this House, but which was house-hold word in his own country, who had for forty years been one of the leaders of the political progress, and who had unsparingly criticised men and measures and who was in consequence regarded with suspicion by the administration, that gentleman was brought into contact with His Royal Highness, and somewhat to his surprise was introduced to him. He fell upon his knees and with folded hands and in faltering accents protested his loyalty and devotion to the Crown and to this country. That action on the part of one who was unjustly charged with disloyalty was a very remarkable one, because it was the strongest evidence of the goodwill and loyalty which lay at the heart of the educated Indian people. The Indian people were loyal and grateful for the education with which they had been endowed and for the liberty they enjoyed and they were grateful for their immunity from invasion; but that gratitude was tempered by the feeling that the pledges held out to them by the late Queen Victoria and the various Acts of the Legislature had not been fulfilled.”

At the time when His Royal Highness visited India a report was circulated to the effect that an official conspiracy had been formed to protect him from the evil influence of three daily papers of Calcutta namely the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* which was then under the editorship of Moti Lal and the *Bengalee* and the *Statesman* then under the editorial management of Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea and Mr. Ratcliffe respectively. It was further alleged that some of the Indian authorities had at first made every attempt to prevent the Prince from coming out to this country and seeing the situation for himself. Failing in that attempt, the report went on, they resolved to keep a strict watch over the surroundings of the future Sovereign so that, no appeal from India might reach his ears. Of course I could not vouch for the correctness of the above report. But all the same I must say that it was believed to be true

by the general public. Moti Lal also believed it to be true and it occurred to him to defeat, if possible, the object of this alleged or supposed conspiracy and thereby confound the enemies of India, real or imaginary.

It so happened that Sir Walter Lawrence, Private Secretary to the Prince of Wales, was an old friend of Moti Lal and it was through his intervention that Moti Lal could have an interview with the Prince. But let me narrate the incident in the words of Moti Lal himself. In course of an article describing the incident Moti Lal writes :—

“Sir Walter Lawrence was an old friend of mine, if I may have the privilege of claiming the friendship of such a highly-placed Englishman. He treated me as he would treat a countryman of his in whom he had absolute confidence and for whom he had friendly regard. I also found after a short acquaintance with him that he was by nature a noble-hearted gentleman and a sincere friend of India. Indeed, like Sir Dunlop Smith, the Private Secretary of the Viceroy, he entertained the idea that an Anglo-Indian official was much indebted to India, and, therefore, he was bound, at least from a sense of gratitude, to serve the interests of the people of this country to the best of his ability.

“I came to know that not only was Sir Walter a regular reader of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* but he also placed copies of it regularly before His Royal Highness which enabled him to acquaint himself with the views and aspirations of the educated Indian public as expressed through this organ of theirs. Information also reached me from a reliable source that the Prince of Wales was intelligent, far-seeing and sympathetic and what was more, he was desirous of knowing the people first-hand and for that purpose was making the fullest use of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, perhaps the only Indian paper to which he had access. Subsequently I heard from Sir Walter in reply to a letter of mine welcoming him to this country that he would, in spite of his multifarious duties, make it a point to see me in Calcutta.

“Sir Walter was able to keep his word. Though over-whelmed with work and having scarcely any breathing time he asked me to see him on the day the Prince of Wales intended to go to Barrackpur. His Royal Highness and Sir Walter were then staying at the Government House and when I met the latter he most

feelingly and sincerely sympathised with the sorrows of Indians caused by the Partition of Bengal. I felt at the time if Sir Walter had remained here as Private Secretary to Lord Curzon, the latter would not possibly have thrust the needless measure upon the country and convulsed it in an unprecedented manner ; at least, Sir Walter would have done his best to deter his chief.

"While in the midst of his conversation, Sir Walter all on a sudden asked me, 'Would you like to see the Prince of Wales?' It took some moments for me to understand what he meant. For a representative of a paper of forty years' standing which is supposed to be regarded with unfriendly eye by a considerable section of the officials, to be brought face to face with the future Sovereign—surely that was a joke ! But it was no joke ; Sir Walter was quite serious.

"Though I had been taken by surprise and given no time to think of the situation my mind worked rapidly and I at once determined what course to follow. I thought a set speech would not do ; it would not do also, on coming face to face with the august personage, to relate to him the grievances of India, neither would it do to greet His Royal Highness with a few complimentary phrases. I was aware that the Prince had been a regular reader of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and therefore fully acquainted with the burning questions of the day affecting the Indian people. A speech describing our needs and wrongs was therefore not felt necessary.

"I also felt that perhaps one of the reasons of granting me an audience was that by reading the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* His Royal Highness had come to feel real sympathy for the people and therefore wanted to convey some assuring words to them through my journal. What I then did has been described with substantial correctness by Sir Henry Cotton in his speech in Parliament.

"Instead of shaking the hands which the Prince had graciously extended towards me I humbly submitted that that was not the Indian way to show respect for one who was to be their future Sovereign. I knelt down and addressed these few words with folded hand and choking voice :—

" 'May it please Your Royal Highness, Humble as I am, I am greatly honoured by this interview. I shall ever remember it with gratitude. I am now in the presence of our future King Emperor. Permit me to say that poor India is in a bad way. It needs protection at Your Royal Highness's hands, for you are our future

Sovereign. Pray don't forget the Indians, but remember that they are as much yours as the forty millions of England. What they need most is the genuine sympathy of their rulers.'

"His Royal Highness appeared to be very much affected, and so was Sir Walter Lawrence who stood close by. In an earnest manner the Prince asked me to rise and when he did so he was graciously pleased to address these words to me in a tone which deeply touched my heart :—

" 'I am very pleased to come across you. You want an assurance from me that I will not forget the Indians. Well, I assure you, I shall not and cannot forget the Indians. I shall ever remember them and make it a point to tell my father how immensely gratified I have been with the magnificent reception your people have given me. It shall also be my pleasant duty to tell my father that you are in need of a wider sympathy. I carry with me very happy impressions about India.'

"The Prince of Wales thus left a very hope inspiring message for the people of India, and he also redeemed this promise by telling his august father and the people of England in his famous Guild Hall speech that 'the task of governing India would be made easier were the rulers to infuse into it a wider element of sympathy'."

In the year 1911-12, when King Emperor George the V again came to India in connection with his coronation ceremony and was staying at Belvedere, Moti Lal was lying seriously ill at his residence at Baghbazar. Being unable to pay his personal homage to the King Emperor he conveyed his greetings and expression of loyalty to His Imperial Majesty through a letter. The King Emperor was graciously pleased to send him the following touching and extremely kind letter through His Majesty's Private Secretary, Lord Stamfordham :—

"4th January, 1912.

"Dear Sir,

The King Emperor was graciously touched in reading your letter of the third instant and also the newspaper cutting from your paper the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* which accompanied it.

His Imperial Majesty has a very pleasant recollection of seeing you here six years ago and much regrets

your health does not admit of your giving him the opportunity of again receiving you. His Imperial Majesty sincerely trusts that you may soon be restored to health.

Yours very faithfully,  
STAMFORD."

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## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE HISTORIC BARISAL CONFERENCE

Cry of *Bande Mataram* Prohibited—Delegates Assaulted—Surendra Nath Arrested—Moti Lal and Others Offer Themselves for Arrest—Civil Disobedience in Embryo.

The reader will certainly feel interested to know that Civil Disobedience was practised at Barisal in Bengal in 1906 at the historic Bengal Provincial Conference held in that town and that Surendra Nath Banerjea and Moti Lal Ghose took the leading part in it, though the name of Civil Disobedience was then unknown or not very well-known. It happened in this way. The Conference was to have been held on the 14th and the 15th April. A large number of educated and influential gentlemen from all sides of Bengal went to Barisal to attend the Conference and Moti Lal was one of them. Mr. Abdul Rasul, a well-known Mahomedan Barrister of the Calcutta High Court, was to have presided. When the Conference was about to be held the Government of Sir Bampfylde Fuller, the first Lieutenant Governor of the newly-created Province of East Bengal, prohibited the cry of *Bande Mataram* in public streets. When the delegates assembled at Barisal on the 14th of April a public meeting was held there to settle whether they should cry *Bande Mataram* in the public streets or obey the orders of the District authorities. On the morning of that day some Police officers had gone to the house of Babu Aswini Kumar Dutt, leader of Barisal and Chairman of the Reception Committee, and told him on behalf of the Magistrate that the delegates would be allowed to cry *Bande Mataram* only from



Brojo Mohan College buildings to the Conference hall, which were very close to each other. Babu Aswini Kumar replied that the delegates had already passed a resolution that they would cry *Bande Mataram* while escorting the President from the Raja Bahadur's Haveli to the pavilion of the Conference and they would do so. The Police officers then said that in that case the delegates would be arrested and if they resisted they would be taken by force. Aswini Kumar replied that they would not resist arrest and if any delegate were arrested he would readily surrender himself to the Police ; and that was the decision of the meeting also.

Now, when the question was being discussed at the meeting as to whether *Bande Mataram* should be uttered or not in the public streets some of the foremost leaders of the time were trying to damp the spirit of the more ardent patriots. Moti Lal to whom the question was referred for final decision stood up and said, "I shall utter *Bande Mataram* in the public streets even if it were to cost me my head, which, perhaps, is not a very valuable commodity. But at the same time I would ask my friends not to resist the Police on any account if they attempt to arrest us." This decisive declaration rendered further discussion unnecessary and the meeting resolved to cry *Bande Mataram* and undergo any sacrifice necessary for doing so.

On the day when the Conference was to meet a number of policemen were found stationed in different parts of the town with regulation *lathis*. In the Police lines facing the Raja Bahadur's Haveli the number of these policemen armed with deadly *lathis* was the largest. Besides, dozens of guns were placed near the Police lines so that the public might have a clear view of them from the road. Reports were also circulated throughout the town that the Police would fire and shoot down those uttering *Bande Mataram*. To create further alarm Mr. Kemp, the District Superintendent of Police, stationed himself near Raja Bahadur's Haveli and the Assistant Superintendent of Police who was described by the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* as "a young lad who had scarcely got over his

kite-flying age and should be at school now if he has any brain,” was on horse back with a ‘cris’ hanging by his side. He was majestically riding here and there apparently to overawe the delegates and the by-standers.

In the meantime, in order to conduct the President of the Conference to the pandal where the Conference was to be held, Babus Moti Lal Ghose, Surendra Nath Banerjea, Bhupendra Nath Basu and many other delegates assembled in the private compound of Raja Bahadur’s Haveli. From there the President started in a carriage for the pandal. The Assistant Police Superintendent now placed his horse at the entrance of the gate of Raja Bahadur’s Haveli and sought to prevent the delegates from coming out, one-half of whom had already been in the street. A number of policemen also entered the compound with their big *lathis* and began to apply them indiscriminately upon the delegates who attempted to come out. Some of the members of the Anti-Circular Society who happened to be there were brutally assaulted by them.

When the news about the assault reached the leaders Bhupendra Nath Basu went to look for the assaulted persons. Moti Lal and Surendra Nath were on foot in a row following the carriage of the President Mr. A. Rasul, who was accompanied by Mrs. Rasul, an English lady. Policemen now came from different directions making high jumps and displaying their *lathis*. Surendra Nath and Moti Lal then turned back to see what was going on, when Mr. Kemp, District Superintendent of Police approached the former and gave him to understand that he had been ordered to arrest him. Surendra Nath said that he was at his disposal. Moti Lal now came forward and said, “Arrest me also.” But Mr. Kemp’s reply was that he had no orders to arrest him. Subsequently Babus Aswini Kumar Dutt, Bhupendra Nath Basu, Bipin Chandra Pal and other leaders also offered themselves for arrest, and they also got the same reply from the Superintendent of Police. Not a single policeman met with the slightest resistance or opposition at the hands of the indignant crowds which but

for the sincere desire of the leaders to keep the public peace at any cost might have gone out of hand any moment.

Surendra Nath was immediately taken to the Magistrate's house where he was summarily fined Rs. 400, Rs. 200 for being member of an unlicensed procession and Rs. 200 for contempt of court. The Conference met as usual and broke up in the evening. When the delegates were returning home they again shouted out *Bande Mataram* which had been prohibited by the authorities. This was much more than what the authorities could bear with impunity and so when the Conference sat again on the next day an order under the much-abused Section 144 Criminal Procedure Code was served on those who were holding the Conference as they were not willing to give an undertaking that they would not cry *Bande Mataram* in the public streets. As soon as the order was served inside the Conference pandal the delegates peacefully dispersed shouting all through *Bande Mataram*, an innocent slogan which means nothing more than 'Mother, I bow to thee', mother being taken here to mean the motherland.

Long after the above incidents had happened, to be precise in the year 1921, when Mahatma Gandhi had started his non-co-operation movement and was preparing the country for civil disobedience an article appeared in the *Statesman* of the 10th November which referred to the part played by Moti Lal in the Barisal Conference. It said that "the invidious distinction of inaugurating both non-co-operation and civil disobedience belongs not to Mr. Gandhi but to Babu Moti Lal Ghose." It quoted from the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* a description of the incidents leading to Babu Moti Lal Ghose's offering himself for arrest to the police and continued :—

"It will thus be seen that the civil disobedience was actually practised first at Barisal in Bengal in 1906 and that Babu Moti Lal Ghose was the father of the idea. Not only this. The cult of non-co-operation was also first preached by Babu Moti Lal Ghose at the very same time at Barisal.

"The Conference assembled after the incident mentioned above and the first resolution asking the

people to cease to co-operate with the Government was moved by Babu Moti Lal Ghose. The following is the translation of the resolution as is embodied in the Bengali book 'Jajna Bhanga' (now out of print) by Babu Priya Nath Guha of Barisal:—

"The free and unrestricted use of *lathis* by the Police in broad day light under the orders of the District and the Assistant District Superintendents of Police on the delegates assembled to welcome Mr. A. Rasul, the President-elect, and the arrest of Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea, one of the leaders, without any reason have conclusively proved that lawful administration has ceased to exist in the District of Barisal. Further, in view of the repressive measures that are being applied against the patriotic workers throughout Eastern Bengal and Assam, this Conference is of opinion that a proper and legal system of administration is no longer in existence in this part of the country. Therefore, no question the final settlement of which depends upon the workings of the present irresponsible Government will be discussed in this Conference and only those questions, the result of which can be obtained by the efforts of the people themselves, will be discussed."

"This resolution was seconded by the late Pandit Brahma Bandhab Upadhyaya, Editor of *Sandhya* and supported by Pandit Gispati Kabyatirtha, Editor of *Howrah Hitaishi* and carried unanimously. It will, therefore, be seen that the invidious distinction of inaugurating both non-co-operation and civil disobedience belongs not to Mr. Gandhi but to Babu Moti Lal Ghose."

"It has already been stated in these columns that the idea of reviving the *charka* also emanated from Moti Babu in 1906 and he made strenuous efforts both through his paper and personal influence to give effect to it. His efforts did not go quite in vain; for, the spinning wheel was introduced in a large number of *bhadralok* families in Bengal. Unfortunately the leaders who carried on the Partition agitation attached very little importance to the subject, mainly because their speeches on *charka* would not elicit as much shouts of applause as their strong criticism of the Government. We must, however, freely and frankly admit that but for a grander personality like Mahatma Gandhi neither the problem of the revival of the *charka* nor the question of civil disobedience would have materialised in the way they have done and will likely take a more practical shape in the near future."

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## CHAPTER XXX

### THE CONGRESS SPLIT AT SURAT

Quarrels between Extremists and Moderates—Origin of the Split—Moti Lal's Efforts for a United Congress—His Failure—Conventionists and Non-conventionists—Attempts at Reconciliation—Conference at Patrika Office—The Madras Congress (1914).

The split in the session of the All-India National Congress at Surat in the year 1907 is now a matter of history. Dr. Rash Behari Ghose, who was the President-elect belonged to the party which was then popularly known as the Moderate Party. Lord Minto was then following the policy of repression laid down by his predecessor Lord Curzon. So that the Extremists were in no peaceful mood. Somehow or other they got scent of the fact that the Moderates had decided upon giving up the fighting programme of the Extremists and dropping Swadeshism, Boycott, National Education and Self-Government from the resolutions they wanted to pass at the Congress—at least that was what the Extremists apprehended. This was too much for them and they made up their mind to prevent such a scandal. Moreover the Extremists were at this time smarting under a sense of grievance at certain observations of the President-elect and were thus not well disposed towards him. Hence on the eve of the Congress the leaders formed two groups, one composed of men like Dr. Rash Behari Ghose, Surendra Nath Banerjee, Gokhale and Pheroze Shah Mehta ; and the other composed of Aswini Kumar Dutt, Moti Lal Ghose, Tilak, Aurobindo Ghose and others. Now each of the parties wanted to elect one of its own men as the President, and while Tilak was proposing Aswini Kumar Dutt to the chair, Dr. Rash Behari Ghose who was elected by the other side began to read aloud his Presidential address. Tilak insisted on his right to be heard, but a group of the audience who were bent upon breaking the Congress began to shout and hurl shoes, chairs, etc. at the leaders. The result was

that the Congress ended in a fiasco and the session had to be abandoned. This is one version of the affair. Different versions were published in the Press and it is difficult to say which is exactly the correct one.

Moti Lal, who had gone to the Congress at the special invitation of his dear friend Bal Gangadhar Tilak, gives a very interesting account of the incident in the foreward to a book on the late Mr. Tilak, named *A Step in the Steamer*. Writes Moti Lal :—

“The blame of the break up of the Congress at Surat in December, 1907 has been sought to be fastened on Mr. Tilak by his political opponents. He was nicknamed as the ‘Congress-breaker’. But in this matter he did not take one step without consulting me. He dragged me to Surat though I was then ill, and he and I and some other friends settled our plan of work. I remained in the back-ground and Tilak as the leader had to come to the front. All that the Nationalists wanted the Moderate leaders to do was either to withdraw some offensive expressions which the President-elect had used towards them in one of his speeches at a meeting of the Viceregal Council or to permit them to enter a protest against the same in the Congress. When this was proposed the Moderate leaders were furious. Sir Pheroze Shah Mehta was specially intolerant in his tone and behaviour, when we made an attempt to compromise the matter ; and later on he refused to see Mr. Tilak, when by appointment he went over to his place to have a further talk in this connection. The only course now left to the Nationalists was to record a formal protest against the election of a President who was not friendly to them at the time when he would be proposed to be elected. And Mr. Tilak gave a notice to the Chairman of the Reception Committee that he would move such a resolution.

“If this legitimate request of the Nationalists were acceded to every thing would have passed peacefully, for they were in a minority and the motion was bound to be defeated. But both parties had then lost the balance of their minds. Mr. Tilak was not permitted to move the resolution and he on his part was determined to do it and refused to leave the platform unless he was permitted to speak or removed by physical force. A number of men belonging to the Moderate Camp now

lost all control over themselves, fell upon Mr. Tilak and began dragging him, when a Marathi shoe, meant, some say, for Mr. Tilak, while others aver, it was aimed at his enemies, struck Sir Pheroze Shah Mehta and brushed Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea's face and added confusion to the scene. The more excited partisans of the rival parties then commenced to throw chairs at one another and the sitting of the Congress was suspended. The disturbance was over in ten or fifteen minutes.

"No Indian can contemplate this deplorable affair without a sense of shame and humiliation. Both parties were responsible for the incident, though each party thought that the other was in the wrong. Tilak was also in this frame of mind and a feeling of unmerited wrong was rankling in his breast, when accompanied by Ray Yatindra Nath Chaudhury I approached him with the following proposal.

"I still remember the very words I addressed him on this occasion. I was trying my humble best to effect a reconciliation and have the Congress held on the following day though without prospect of success. Tilak knew it. I told him, 'Look here, Tilak, you alone can save the situation. But it means tremendous sacrifice on your part—self-condemnation. Knowing you as I do, I am confident you are prepared for it. Now, here is a glorious work for you. They want your blood. Why not give it to them for the sake of the Congress? I know you are not the author of this unpleasant affair. They, however, want you to be gilletted to infamy by stigmatising you as such. Will you give me a written undertaking saying that you are willing to take the whole odium on your shoulders and make a public declaration to that effect if thereby the death of the Congress is averted? It would be a noble sacrifice on your part of which you might well be proud. Naturally you would feel that this would be doing violence to your honest conviction, as you did not bring about the disturbance. But rather do this violence than allow this national organisation to collapse.'

"Mr. Tilak was moved. There was a hot discussion. Most of his adherents vehemently opposed the proposal. They would not allow him to be cruelly sacrificed. Tilak reflected for a while and then arrived at his decision. There was a sad smile in his face and he said, 'Here is the undertaking.' And he wrote a few lines to the effect—'I undertake to take the responsibility of this unfortunate incident upon myself if the other party would

agree to continue the Congress.' I do not remember the exact wording, but this was the purport of what he wrote. Ponder on the magnitude of the magnanimity and self-abnegation of the man. He cheerfully consented to humiliate himself between relentless enemies who would tear him to pieces if they could, though sincerely believing himself to be innocent. And fancy also the grave risk he incurred. Many of his bitter and unscrupulous opponents availing themselves of this self-condemnation might seek to ruin his character and reputation in the eyes of his countrymen carefully concealing from their knowledge the noblest motive which had prompted him to resort to this course of self-condemnation.

"With this written undertaking in our possession I, Ray Yatindra Nath Ray Chaudhury and a few other friends ran to the Moderate Camp with a view to bring about a reconciliation, if possible, but we were simply howled out by the Moderate leaders headed by Sir Pheroze Shah Mehta. They were all in high temper and it was impossible to reason with them."

The break up of the Surat Congress gave much food to the Press and the Platform and for a whole year they cavilled at each other. Next year a meeting was held at the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* office in Calcutta where leaders from all the provinces in India assembled and a manifesto was issued showing the reasons why they were not willing to join the Congress. The meeting was attended by Moti Lal Ghose, Aurobindo Ghose, B. Chakravarti, Shyam Sundar Chakravarti, Kumar Krishna Dutt, Hirendra Nath Datta and Ray Yatindra Nath Chaudhury from Bengal; Tilak, Kelker, Khaparde and others from Bombay and other representatives from other provinces. The party headed by these leaders gradually came to be known as the Extremist party, and Moti Lal, perhaps the oldest of them all, was regarded with deep veneration. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* office was thus at one time the citadel of Extremists of India.

After the Surat split Surendra Nath became the leader in Bengal of the other party which went on holding the Congress and was known as the Moderate Party. This party was more pro-Government than not and supported the Government in



many matters in which the latter had not popular support. In Congress language the parties came to be known as Conventionists and Non-Conventionists.

Forgetful of their country's cause these two parties fell foul of each other for some years and the Government chuckled in glee. Moti Lal was ever sorry for this division in the Congress camp and he always tried that the parties might again present a united front. With reference to this situation he said that "the split between the so-called Conventionists and Non-Conventionists has been responsible for a lot of mischief. The worst mischief it has done is to convert what was originally a highly useful body, we mean the Indian National Congress, into a perfectly life-less, soul-less and use-less body, and also to separate the people by driving an artificial wedge between them."

Since the split at Surat several attempts were made in Bengal and some other provinces for a United Congress and if they failed it was due not a little to the temper displayed by some of the Conventionist leaders, at least this was the opinion of Moti Lal who belonged to and in fact was the leader of the Bengal group of Non-Conventionists.

It was at the Bengal Provincial Conference held at Pabna in March 1908 that the question of a re-united Congress came to be first discussed. It was attended by the pick of the educated community of both East and West Bengals ; in fact, it was thoroughly representative. Moreover it had one advantage, it was presided over by the poet Rabindra Nath Tagore who belonged to neither party.

Surendra Nath on behalf of the Conventionists suggested that the United Congress should be brought about through the Committee appointed by the Surat Convention. Moti Lal observed that if the Conventionists had a Committee, the Non-Conventionists too had a Committee of their own. He, therefore, submitted two alternative propositions before the Subjects Committee of the Conference. One was that the Convention Committee and the Congress Continuation Committee should unite and arrange for a United Congress. The other was that

the previous all-India Congress Committee or the proposed amalgamated Committees of the Conventionists and the Non-Conventionists should arrange for the sitting of the next Congress on an agreed basis. Moti Lal said that speaking for himself he preferred the former ; but if it were urged that the All-India Congress was dead he would say in reply that its Secretaries and Members were very much alive. Ultimately the following resolution was passed by the Conference without a single dissentient voice :—

“This Conference requests the Congress Secretaries and the Members of the All-India Congress Committee appointed in Calcutta in 1906 to arrange the holding of the National Congress on the lines settled at the Calcutta Congress.”

The Conventionists, however, ignored the demand of the Non-Conventionists and held their Congress at Madras.

Further attempts were made from time to time for bringing about a compromise between the Conventionists and the Non-Conventionists. For this purpose an All-India Conference of Conventionists and Non-Conventionists was held at the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* office in November, 1908. Babu Moti Lal Ghose, Ray Yatindra Nath Chaudhury, Mr. M. R. Bodas, Mr. A. Rasul, Babu Anath Bandhu Guha and Babu Aswini Kumar Dutt were the chief conveners of this conference. The hall on the first floor of 2, Ananda Chatterjee Lane, which, by the bye, was the bed-room of Babu Moti Lal Ghose was converted into a meeting room. About sixty chairs were placed in that hall all of which were occupied. Dr. Sundari Mohan Das, the well known medical practitioner of Calcutta (since, Principal of the National Medical College) was voted to the chair and among those present were Messrs. M. R. Bodas, Pleader, Bombay ; N. C. Kelker of the *Maharatta* ; C. V. Vaidya, LL.B., Bombay (Retired Chief Justice of Gwalior) ; R. B. Deshpande, LL.B., Pleader, Ahmednagar ; B. S. Moonje, Nagpur ; Ray Yatindra Nath Chaudhury, Moti Lal Ghose, Shyam Sundar Chakravarti, Bhupendra Nath Basu, Narendra Nath Set, Amrita Krishna Mullik, Hirendra Nath Datta, Anath Bandhu Guha, Hemendra Prasad Ghose and others. At the

suggestion of Babu Bhupendra Nath Basu the Conference agreed that the first article of the Conventionist constitution in which it was stated that Self-Government within the Empire was the goal of the Congress and constitutional agitation its method was to be signed absolutely by the Non-Conventionists, but at the same time the Conventionists should on their part agree to get the Constitution and the rules of the Congress framed by a representative Committee of both parties. Babu Bhupendra Nath Basu undertook to place the matter before the Conventionist leaders of other Provinces and use his influence with them in persuading them to accept it. He did his best, but Conventionists of other Provinces under the lead of Sir Pheroze Shah Mehta were not in a mood to compromise.

In November 1914, Babu Bhupendra Nath Basu was elected as the President of the Congress to be held at Madras in December next. This gave a new fillip to the movement for a union of the two groups, Conventionists and Non-Conventionists. For, Bhupendra Nath was one of those Conventionists who had all along desired a re-union of the parties. Moreover he and Moti Lal were very closely attached to each other. A small incident that happened in the presence of the writer may be re-called in this connection. When the news came of the election of Babu Bhupendra Nath as President of the Congress Babu Moti Lal Ghose and Hirendra Nath Datta were having a friendly talk in the corridor adjoining Moti Lal's room. I still remember Hirendra Babu in his characteristic way saying to Moti Lal, "This time you are sure to attend the Congress ; your friend has been elected President." To this Moti Lal replied, "Not only will I attend the Congress, but I will also see that a United Congress is held."

And Moti Lal did his best to bring about a united Congress. He wrote about a dozen articles in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* advocating the cause of a united Congress. Mrs. Annie Besant, who was then editing the *New India* also took up the matter. She came over to Calcutta and spent hours together with Moti Lal at the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* office trying to devise ways and means for bringing about such a union between the two

parties who had separated at Surat. Besides writing in the *Patrika* Moti Lal was also personally influencing the members of his party for a union. At the instance of Mrs. Besant he also wrote a number of lengthy and spirited appeals for a united Congress and these were published under his name in the columns of the *New India* of Madras and the *Leader* of Allahabad in early December, 1914. So the ground for a united Congress was prepared.

True to his word Moti Lal attended the Madras Congress, though not as a delegate ; he was precluded from doing so on account of his allegiance to his party, but he did so as a visitor. Moti Lal, Bhupendra Nath and Babu Krishna Kumar Mitter, the first one the leader of the Extremists of Bengal and the two other gentlemen, leaders of the Moderates started together from Calcutta for Madras. On their way an address was presented to Bhupendra Nath at the Rajahmundry Railway Station and in course of his reply he said :—

“As you have said in your address it is true I have been trying my very best to bring about a reconciliation between the two parties from the year 1908 ; and it is equally true, as you have said, that all efforts have so far failed. This year I shall use all tact and moderation to bring about the necessary reconciliation. It is with this object that I persuaded and prevailed upon my friend Babu Moti Lal Ghose accompanying me. However, how far I shall succeed in this direction depends largely upon the attitude the other Provinces take up in the matter. As for Bengal there are no two parties and we are all united and one.”

In spite of their efforts Moti Lal and Bhupendra Nath failed to bring about the desired for rapprochement at Madras. The fact is that the Moderates (or Conventionists as they were then called) dreaded that if the split was made up Bal Gangadhar Tilak might come forward and capture the Congress. Among the followers of Sir Pheroze Shah Mehta there were men who would rather have agreed to let the Congress die than make it over to Tilak.

Referring to the failure of the Madras Congress to bring about a reconciliation between Extremists and Moderates a

gentleman who had been to the Congress wrote to the *Maharatta* of Poona :—

“The veteran Congressman, Babu Moti Lal Ghose, who in his admirable appeal for a united Congress had said that ‘either we must have a united Congress or none at all’ had gone to Madras in spite of his bad health with the ‘olive branch of peace’ in his hand. It was freely discussed in the Bengal camp that Babu Bhupendra Nath had given a definite promise to Babu Moti Lal Ghose to give all the weight of his Presidential authority to pass the amendment (of the rules for the election of the delegates) with a view to widen the doors of election and that the veteran Congressman had taken the trouble to undertake the long journey in his weak health trusting on the promise of the President-elect, who all of a sudden changed his mind in deference to the wishes of the Bombay leaders and gave his Presidential weight to the side which wished to refer the matter to a Committee.”

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## CHAPTER XXXI

### MOTI LAL AND ANGLO-INDIANS

Differences Between Indians and Anglo-Indians—Attempts At Union—Boycott Movement Aggravates Difference—Articles on St. Andrews’ Day Dinner.

The fact need not be disguised that Indians and Anglo-Indians are not generally speaking on the best of terms. Though there are many things in which their interests are identical an unreasoning race-feeling divides them and keeps them at arms length from each other. Through his writings in the *Patrika* Moti Lal tried on many occasions to impress on the Anglo-Indian community that there were many things in common between them and the children of the soil so that they should live and move freely among the Indians. Their interests were more akin to those of the children of the soil than those of their white masters, the birds of passage who had come to this country for petty pelf. They should, said Moti Lal, live among the

Indians as a part and parcel of the Indian population and their manners and customs and ways of living should be like those of the Indians. If they had followed this sane advice it would have been really advantageous for them.

Moti Lal also suggested on many occasions that Indians and Englishmen should live in this country like friends and not as enemies always trying to cut each others throats. An attempt, for example, for a union of Indians and Englishmen was made by the conductors of the *Capital*, Messrs. Tremearke and Luke ("Max") with the help of some Missionary gentlemen like the late Reverend Tomory of the Duff College. Taking advantage of the threatened partition of Bengal in 1905 which affected both Indians and non-official Englishmen in India "Max" through an article in the *Capital* suggested the possibility of forming what he called the Bengal Provincial and Municipal League for the mutual benefit of the two communities. Wrote "Max" in the *Capital* :—

I have expressed my strong belief that the Partition scheme is dead, but lest there be any remnant of life left, let it get a finishing stroke. Let a great public meeting be called for the purpose of forming a Bengal Provincial and Municipal League, strongly representative of all classes in the community, Indian and European alike, for the purpose of promoting good government both in the province and in the municipalities of Bengal. The League can be incorporated for permanent work with a strong executive vigilant committee capable of watching over the trend of public affairs and of taking suitable action as occasion arises. The first and foremost action would be to ask the Government of India to suspend everything in connection with the Partition movement until the question has been threshed in the Imperial Parliament. And in the meantime the executive committee could take ways and means in a very authoritative manner of letting Parliament know the exact state of feeling throughout the whole of Bengal in reference to the partition movement and the desire of the people for a more thoroughly equipped administration of the undivided Province under a capable Governor and a well-appointed Council."

The Reverend A. Tomory of the Duff College took up the suggestion in right earnest and at his instance an association

of the nature spoken above was sought to be formed with the name of *The Bengal Citizens' League*. Several preliminary meetings in this connection were held at the *Capital* office and they were attended by such men as Raja Peary Mohan Mukherji of Uttarpara and Babus Moti Lal Ghose, Surendra Nath Banerjea and Bhupendra Nath Basu and others on behalf of the Indian community and a number of Anglo-Indian gentlemen representing their community. The constitution and rules for the proposed public body were framed and a draft memorial was prepared for submission to Government praying for a Governorship of Bengal and the suspension of the Partition Scheme. In the mean time the fateful day arrived—the 16th of October, 1906—the memorable day when Bengal was formally partitioned, and the whole Province was thrown into convulsions. An estrangement sprang up between the Bengali and the Anglo-Indian leaders owing to the Boycott Movement, and the proposed *Bengal Citizens' League* died in its cradle, if not, before it was born.

Several years later, after the second partition of Bengal, following the visit of King Emperor George V to India in 1912, Mr. Dudley B. Myers, an influential Anglo-Indian, wanted to form an Indo-European Association in Calcutta. This time also Moti Lal welcomed the idea and the *Patrika* wrote that the previous attempt, referred to above, at the formation of a society of Indians and Anglo-Indians had failed because the circumstance—*viz.*, the Partition of Bengal—which was to cement the union between the two communities affected the Indians much more than the Anglo-Indians. "But," continued the *Patrika* :—

"In the transfer of the seat of Government to Delhi and the separation of Behar from Bengal the Anglo-Indians and the Indians are equally affected ; so, if serious efforts are made just now by only half a dozen representative Europeans and Bengalis to start a common society for their mutual benefit they may be attended with the desired result."

Non-official Englishmen, however, did not see their way to unite with the Indians even for a common cause. They may have their excuse for not doing so. But what on earth can be

the excuse of the Anglo-Indians, I mean not the birds of passage but those who have a real stake in the country and are as much children of the soil as Indians themselves, for following a similar course of action? It is strange indeed that they cannot convince themselves that their interests are more akin to those of the Indians than the Britishers in India who also go by the name of Anglo-Indians. One fails to find any community of interest between them beyond a mere similarity of names. It is a pity that they look to Britain in the same way as Mahomedans born and brought up in India look to Meccâ or Medina.

One of Moti Lal's favourite subjects on which he expatiated almost every year in order to castigate and at the same time regale Anglo-Indians was the St. Andrews' Day Dinner. Scotchmen in Calcutta celebrate their national festival every year on the 30th of November. On this date they meet and invite some leading Englishmen and one or two Bengali gentlemen also with whom the local Scotch people may be in love. Now, Moti Lal often twitted the Scotch of Calcutta on inviting their masters the Englishmen to dinner and not the Bengalees who were their fellow subjects. He argued that the Bengalees and the Scotchmen were in the same position so far as the English were concerned ; for, Scotchmen had no separate existence as a nation and politically they were as much subject to England as the Bengalees. Sometimes he would comment on the foolishness of the Scottish people who spent money in giving dinners to the wise Englishmen who ate them. The haggis and the whiskey that were used in these dinners formed the other subjects of comment. Sometimes the speeches delivered on the St. Andrews' Day Dinner by the Governor or other men of position formed the text of the article in the *Patrika*. Indeed, he viewed this event from various angles of vision in different years and his writings on this subject in his inimitable humorous way were only characteristic of him. They evoked the admiration of the readers and they produced great mirth not only among his Indian readers but among his English and Scotch readers-as well. The Anglo-Indian newspapers sometimes gave



replies to his writings on this subject but those only acted as spurs to Moti Lal to give replies to these replies. These replies showed his power of repartee. Indeed, in matters like these his inventive brain could find replies to whatever other papers might write, so that he would always have the last say in the matter.

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## CHAPTER XXXII

### MOTI LAL ON JURY SYSTEM.

Moti Lal As a Juror—A Juror In A Better Position Than A Judge or Magistrate—Plea For Extension of Jury System—A Funny Incident.

The following conversation between Babu Moti Lal Ghose and an Englishman, both of whom were jurors in a certain case will prove interesting. The story was narrated by him on many occasions. The conversation took place when the jury had retired after the charge of the Judge presiding over the Sessions in the High Court.

The Englishman :—I am for conviction.

Moti Lal :—Your grounds?

The Englishman :—Why, the prisoners have produced no witnesses.

Moti Lal :—What for?

The Englishman :—To prove that they had not committed the assault.

Moti Lal :—How could they prove a negative?

The Englishman :—I don't know that. They should have proved that the murderous assault was not committed by them. I convict them of culpable homicide.

Moti Lal :—But His Lordship charged us practically to convict the accused of grievous hurt.

The English juror however would not budge an inch from his position. So he wrote down on a piece of paper something

to the effect that in his opinion the prisoners were guilty of culpable homicide and asked the other jurors to sign it. They however reminded him that the verdict of the jury is not taken down in writing and then he tore the paper into pieces.

Moti Lal had served as a juror on numerous occasions and even upto a very old age. He claimed exemption from being called upon as a juror only when he was physically incapacitated from performing this onerous duty on account of his old age. His motto in life was, and he often advised others to bear it in mind, never take a man to be dishonest unless he proves himself to be so. 'If you suspect others you can never be happy,' he said, 'you should never think any man to be dishonest unless the conduct of that man is such that it is a conclusive proof of his dishonesty.' In his capacity as a juror also he strictly followed this principle. It is but one of the basic principles of civilised jurisprudence that the guilt of the accused must be unquestionably established, that the evidence must be such that it would irresistibly lead to the conclusion that the accused is guilty, that there must not be any reasonable doubt as to the guilt of the accused before he can be convicted. Another basic principle is that whenever there is a reasonable doubt as to his guilt the benefit of that doubt should always be given to the accused. Moti Lal always kept these principles in view whenever he acted as a juror. He was a great advocate of the jury system and through the columns of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* he not only advocated the extension of the jury system but also inculcated upon the jurors the ordinary fundamental principles of criminal law.

It was, in his opinion, impossible for Magistrates or Sessions Judges to dispense criminal justice impartially. They were human beings after all and had the weaknesses of human beings. Their promotion in many cases depended upon the way in which they dealt with criminal cases. In fact it was an open secret in the nineties of the last century that "No conviction no promotion" was the rule among the officers trying criminal cases. A series of leading articles were published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* under the above headline in which even official

circulars and reports were quoted to prove the strength of this slogan. Indeed, in Crown cases sometimes it is too much to expect that the junior officers (Deputy Magistrates and Sub-Deputy Magistrates) will deliver a judgment against their employer. But a juror is in a far better position. He expects no frown nor favour from the Crown. Moreover, it is not recorded which juror has given what verdict, so that there is not the ghost of a chance of an individual juror's verdict being known either to the Government or to the public. Hence he is free to act according to his conscience—self-interest does not stand in the way of his giving a verdict according to the fundamental principles of civilised criminal jurisprudence. That is why a juror's verdict has a greater weight than the judgment of a judge and in many courts, such as the High Court, a Judge has no alternative but to abide by the unanimous verdict of the jurors.

Let me quote here two passages from a leading article in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* advocating the extension of the jury system into the mofussil written by Moti Lal. The Mss. of this article in his own hand writing still happen to be in my possession. I have selected it for that reason only.

The first passage it is:—

“The inhabitants of both the jury and non-jury districts have a duty in this connection. The latter should memorialise the Governor in Council direct for the introduction of the system in their respective districts under sections 269 Cr. P. C. To each memorial should be appended the names of individuals competent to sit as jurors. As to the districts in which the system already obtains they should also memorialise the Government to make those offences triable by jury which are now disposed of by the Sessions Judge with the help of assessors. They would do well to point out that there is not a single offence in the Penal Code which is not tried by the Jury in Calcutta where their verdict is final. The note of Sir Romesh Chunder would strengthen their hands.”

The other passage is as follows:—

“The most important argument in favour of the extension of the jury system in every district of Bengal

is that this boon was conferred on all European residents in the mofussil in 1883. That was the outcome of the 'White Mutiny' which the famous Ilbert Bill controversy brought about. The infuriated Anglo-Indian community seriously proposed to bombard the Government House if the Government of Lord Ripon would not yield to their claim and their triumph was complete. Not only did they extort the privilege of jury trial for themselves, when residing in the mofussil, unconditionally in the Sessions Court but also in the Court of the Magistrate. In their case the sufficient number of Jurors and Judges was not insisted upon! Lord Ripon felt himself so humiliated and aggrieved at this invidious distinction made between the Indians and the Anglo-Indians that he gave a pledge in one of his speeches on behalf of the Government that like the latter the former would also be allowed to enjoy the privilege of Jury trial more extensively than they had hitherto done. But though three decades have passed away since then, with the exception of three or four districts all the others are in the same position in regard to this matter as they were in 1884."

I may mention here that the Jury system has since been extended to a larger number of Districts in the Province.

I cannot close this chapter without giving a very funny story often told by Moti Lal in connection with his jurorship. In a certain case after the jury had retired they were holding a consultation among themselves as to what verdict to give. Moti Lal was in favour of acquittal. All agreed. But one gentleman who was younger than him by a good many number of years was obdurate—he was for conviction and he would not change his opinion though all were against him and pleaded with him for acquittal. At last Moti Lal, who almost lost his temper, shouted out to him,—“If you don't give a verdict of not guilty, I will give a slap on your face.” There was a loud uproar of laughter in the juror's room and it had its effect—the gentleman climbed down and there was a unanimous verdict of “not guilty.”

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## CHAPTER XXXIII

### SECURITY TAKEN FROM THE PATRIKA.

The Press Act of 1910—Jagatshi Asram Affairs—Patrika's Comments  
Security of Rs. 5,000 Demanded from Patrika—British Press Opinion.

The majority of the non-official members of the Viceroy's Legislative Council led by the late Mr. Gokhale supported the Press Bill of 1910 inspite of the extremely wide and arbitrary nature of its provisions because they thought—and wrongly thought—that the anarchist movement was the result of violent writings in the Indian Press. The two or three papers in Bengal of the "Yugantar" type which preached the cult of violence and assassination had ceased to exist or had been already suppressed by the authorities when the Press Bill was introduced. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and the late Babu Bhupendra Nath Basu opposed the Bill ; but it was passed into a law only to aggravate the smouldering bitterness in the Indian Press by placing it under what may be called a Martial law.

The real plague-spot of the Press Act of 1910 was Section 4. It was the operative section of the Act which armed the Executive Government with absolute powers over the liberty of the Press. The section provided that the local Government could hang a mill-stone round the neck of the keeper of a printing press in the shape of a security of Rs. 5,000, if the newspaper printed or published

"Any words, signs, etc., which are likely or may have a tendency, directly or indirectly, whether by inference, suggestion, allusion, metaphor, implication or otherwise to bring into hatred or contempt any Government established by law or any class or section of His Majesty's subjects in British India."

Sir Lawrence Jenkins, Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court had said in his judgment in the "Comrade" case that the provisions of this section were "very comprehensive and the language was as wide as human ingenuity could make it. They would certainly extend to writings that might even command approval."

Moti Lal had to carry on his paper with this Sword of Damocles constantly hanging over his head. He received warning after warning from the Government to remind him that there was such a thing as the Press Act lest he should forget it. The first warning came to him within a few weeks of the passing of the Press Act. Sir Edward Norman Baker was then the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. Moti Lal inquired of him as to the matter and the nature of the offence for which the warning had been given. His Honour replied that it was a mere formal warning, which had been sent to some other papers also and that its object was to remind the Bengal Press of the existence of the new Press Act.

The Government of Lord Carmichael had also sent some warnings to Babu Moti Lal Ghose. In one of these warnings which was in the form of a letter it was pointed out to Babu Moti Lal Ghose that certain mistakes had crept into an article on a Madras case and he was asked to correct them in the light of the facts supplied by the Government of Madras. This was done with an explanation that the article in question was based on the reply of the Madras Government to an interpellation on the subject, which was very vague and so the writer was not to blame in the matter.

But the wolf at last did come. It was in May, 1913 and it came without a warning. The keeper of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* printing press was served with a notice by the Government of Bengal asking him to deposit Rs. 5,000—the maximum amount provided by the Act—with the Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta as security under the Press Act. But why? That was of course not explained. The Government was good enough to state that it was in connection with an article on the notorious Jagatshi Police case in Assam that this action had been taken. No light was however thrown on the passage or passages or words to which objection had been taken by the Government. The article in question contained some comments on the report of a Divisional Commissioner of Assam on the Jagatshi Ashram affairs. In the opinion of some eminent lawyers there was nothing in the article which could

be construed as preaching "hatred or contempt of any Government established by law."

About the middle of 1912 sensation ran high throughout Bengal on account of certain incidents that happened at the village of Jagatshi, four miles away from Maulvi Bazar in Sylhet. In this village was an abode of some religious people, named "Arunachal Asram" whose head was a Sannyasi named Dayananda Swami. Here *Sankirtans* (mass songs) were held on a lavish scale by the *guru* and his disciples in accompaniment with *khol*, *kartal*, *mridang* and other musical instruments. Men and women freely took part in these religious performances, which was seriously objected to by some people in the neighbourhood who thought that such mixed dances and *sankirtans* were not sanctioned by the Hindu religion and society and so if they were allowed to develop they would tell upon the morals of the local people. With this end in view they tried to stop these practices and took to various devices for doing so. On the 23rd March 1912 one of these persons filed a petition before the Sub-Divisional Officer of Maulvi Bazar complaining against Dayananda Swami and some other leading members of the Asram. It was alleged that the singing of songs, the beating of drums and the playing of instruments day and night which went on in the Asram were interfering with the sleep and causing injury to the health of the local public. Processes were issued against Dayanand Swami and others who put in a defence. In their written statement they said :—

"We are trying to substitute liberal principles for the narrow and illiberal manners and customs of the whole of the present Hindu society. We are encouraging women to join *Sankirtan* in the proper manner and also trying to uproot the narrowness of caste distinction. The complainant, owing to prejudice, apprehending that our such action might bring about a revolution in the society is trying to oppress us in several ways and for that purpose has instituted this case."

Dayananda Swami and his disciples were, however, fined Rs. 10 each by the Sub-Divisional Officer. But the *Sankirtans*

went on as usual and the orthodox oppositionists tried by petitions to the authorities and by other methods to stop these.

On the 20th June a complaint was filed before the Sub-Divisional Officer of South Sylhet (Maulvi Bazar) that a minor boy named Sachindra had been kidnapped by the members of the “Asram”. A warrant was issued for the production of Sachindra. A constable who went to the Asram to execute the warrant returned to the higher officers and reported that he was threatened by the members of the Asram. On the 6th July a party of Policemen headed by one Mr. Brown, Assistant Superintendent of Police went to the Asram but failed to recover Sachindra. On the 8th the aid of the Military was requisitioned and the Asram was attacked and what followed has been described in many quarters as the “Arunachal Asram War.” On one side was arrayed a force of Police and Military armed with rifles and bayonets and on the other side stood the male and female inmates of the Asram known as *Sevaks* and *Sevikas* of the Asram with their drums, musical instruments and *trisuls* (tridents). The result can be better imagined than described. In the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and other newspapers were published accounts of the gross atrocities perpetrated. An enquiry was held by the Assam Government in response to the demand by the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. The report of the enquiry, however, exonerated the officers concerned and vilified the Asram and its people. The Asram was sought to be proved as an “impure, obscene, immoral and indecent institution, opposed to public policy and good morals.” The incidents of the 8th July, 1912 which created a sensation throughout the length and breadth of the Province were described by the authorities as matters of course. To quote from the Resolution of the Chief Commissioner of Assam on the Report of the Officiating Commissioner :—

“It was impossible without employing force to effect the arrest of so large a number of people who refused to submit when called upon to do so. Only a few days before they had published their declaration of independence of the British Government and had circulated it to the newspapers. Their official historian had



chronicled the events of the 6th July as a victory in the Arunachal war and that evening the drums of the Asram were heard in Maulavi Bazar four miles away. The Deputy Commissioner made every attempt to negotiate with Dayananda for a peaceful surrender, but without effect. On the morning of the 8th the Deputy Commissioner gave the inmates of the Asram a final opportunity of surrendering. He told them that he had a strong police force, but that he did not want to use the police, as, if this had to be done the women whom he knew to be in the Asram might get hurt. The only response to this appeal was that, as the small column drew near a party of naked women and almost naked men danced out to meet them. When the Deputy Commissioner and his force entered the Asram, the din was so over-powering that further parley was out of the question. No one would surrender and the arrests had to be forcibly effected. A certain amount of rough-handling of those who resisted was unavoidable, and it is unfortunate that two women accidentally sustained injuries. Those people within the houses who came out quietly were secured, those who refused, to come out being dragged out. The Military Police used the butts of their rifles, but, as the Commissioner has found, the allegation that bayonets were used is absolutely false."

After the publication of the above report the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* pointed out that "it was already admitted that the Police fired without orders" and "it was not denied that the Police used buckshots and bullets and thereby wounded so many as seven persons of whom Babu Mahendra Nath Dey, M.A., B.L., died from the effect of a bullet wound." As to the "certain amount of rough handling" mentioned in the Report the *Patrika* wrote:—

"Why it was only the fracture of a few collar-bones, infliction of bleeding wounds with butts and bayonets, dragging by the hair, tying a human being to a bamboo and carrying him like a pig, *et hoc genus omne!* And all this was of course inevitable!"

A series of trenchant articles followed in the editorial columns of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* severely criticising the action of the police in Assam and of the Executive which tried to shield the conduct of the Police. The result, to quote the *Patrika* again was inevitable.

The series of articles on the Jagatsi Asram affairs published in *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in 1912-13 was too much for the authorities to digest. Hence they demanded a security of Rs. 5,000 from the proprietors of the paper under the Indian Press Act of 1910. The news about the action of the Government and the security demanded from the *Patrika* was cabled to England and it created a stir in newspaper circles. Moti Lal's personality was too well-known to many editors and writers of English newspapers; for journalists of that country on tour in India always made it a point to interview Babu Moti Lal Ghose and they were all impressed with his charming personality.

Wrote the *Pall Mall Gazette*:—

"The Government of India is no doubt amply justified in demanding security from the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, a Calcutta journal printed in English, which has a wide circulation. It is understood to have been publishing some rather violent articles lately. At the same time, we should hardly regard its editor and chief proprietor, Mr. Moti Lal Ghose, as a danger to the community. He is a mild old gentleman with a pleasant smile, who sturdily refuses to adopt European ways or dress. His pen is vitriolic at times. . . . . Moti Lal Ghose is not a revolutionary. He often writes wildly, but he does not neglect to pay friendly calls at Government House, and when some years ago he was presented to the King, then Prince of Wales, he was overcome with loyal devotion. He publishes his paper in a huge rambling warren of a house in North Calcutta, where he lives with a swarm of relatives and dependants in patriarchal fashion. Babies cling about the editor's bare legs as, clad in a scanty piece of linen, he writes torrents of fierce abuse with a most benevolent smile."

The *Pall Mall Gazette*, it may be remembered, was not sympathetic or friendly to Indian aspirations. That it could pay such a tribute as the above to Babu Moti Lal Ghose is only explained by the fact that his personality left a lasting impression on those who came in contact with him.

The *Manchester Guardian* which was well-known for its sympathy towards India wrote as follows:—

"There is nothing in India or out of it, like the

*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, the Calcutta daily which has earned the distinction of being the first important organ of opinion to be dealt with under the coercionist Indian Press Act of 1910. It is emphatically a one-man show, representing its proprietor and editor, Mr. Moti Lal Ghose, and no other party or persons whatsoever. Ever since the Viceroyalty of Lord Lytton the paper has been recognised as the most characteristic product of Bengali journalism. It is full of curious knowledge and still more curious opinion. Its leading articles, you would say, are all from one hand, and that the inimitable hand of Moti Babu himself, wielding a whip of mercilessly stinging cords.

“What has happened now is that the Government of Bengal demands security, probably of the maximum amount of Rs. 5,000 (£333), for the future good behaviour of the paper. In April it published three articles dealing with a Government enquiry into one of the most singular events of recent Indian history—the suppression of a small sect in Assam, the members of which were accused of combining unseemly rites with seditious propaganda. The military police were accused of various brutalities in carrying out their task; a Government Commissioner inquired into the affairs and found the local official blameless, and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* thereupon went for the Government of Assam. The articles, it is said, were a masterpiece of satirical invective, but whether they justify drastic action under the Press Act is, of course, another matter. Moti Babu can quite easily provide the security, though he is understood not to be a wealthy man. He will, however, be quite sure to argue that he has not offended, and that the Government demand is unwarranted.”

It may be observed in passing that though the Government wanted to punish the proprietors of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* by demanding the security they failed to achieve this end. For it only heightened the popularity of the paper and raised it higher in the estimation of the public, who thought the paper had not sinned but had, on the contrary, been sinned against. So, instead of being a punishment the security became a boon.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### MOTILAL AND LORD CARMICHAEL

Carmichael as a Governor—Familiarity with Moti Lal—Asked to Wear the *Dhoti* and rub Mustard Oil.

The Government of Bengal, it soon transpired, had absolutely no hand in the matter of demanding the security of Rs. 5,000 from the *Patrika* in 1913. The Administration of Assam had got offended at its publication of some articles criticising the action of the police in connection with the Jagatshi Asram and they moved Government of India to take action against the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. The Bengal Government was thus quite helpless in the matter. As a matter of fact, I have it on the authority of Babu Moti Lal himself that Lord Carmichael, who was then in the best of terms with Moti Lal, strongly protested. He was very unwilling to carry out the order of the Government of India and had to do so against his wish. He spoke to Lord Hardinge on two occasions to relieve the *Patrika* of the mill-stone round its neck, but Sir Reginald Craddock stood in the way. Mr. P. C. Lyon, Senior Member of the Executive Council of Lord Carmichael's Government, sought twice to make the *Patrika* forfeit its deposit of Rs. 5,000, but Lord Carmichael overruled him. The *Patrika* owes a deep debt of gratitude to Lord Carmichael but for whose protection it would surely have been crushed by a member of his Council to whom the *Patrika* had been an eye-sore. Bengal was at that time under the special displeasure of the gods at Simla on account of the so-called anarchist movement of a few Bengali youths. Simla was bent upon punishing the Bengali press, which, it thought was responsible for disseminating anarchical ideas among the youngmen. Lord Carmichael who knew the real situation took a different view and had much sympathy with the Press and the people of the country ; but sandwiched as he was between the Simla gods on the one hand and the lesser gods

of his own Province on the other, he could not make his existence felt.

The term of office of a Governor is short. Five years, we think, is too small a period for studying and having a thorough grasp of the peculiar problems of a people and prescribing ways and means for their solution and carrying them into practice. The difficulty becomes almost insurmountable when the person who has to do this stupendous job is a foreigner and new-comer, and, even when he has come to this country, "lives, moves and has his being" mostly among foreigners who must naturally look to their own interests first and then to those of the children of the soil. If the Governor be an Indian we think he has one advantage, he has no time to lose in studying the situation as an alien Governor must do. Being born and brought up in India spade work has to be done by him even before he has ascended the "gadi." But a Governor coming from a foreign country, the manners and customs and the peculiar problems of whose people are quite different from those of ours, has to do much spade work even after his assumption of office. If he does not succumb to the surrounding official and secretarial influence, and can keep the I. C. S. at a safe distance from him and mix freely with the people of the country instead of the handful of his own countrymen of the privileged class, we think, he can then be in a position to understand the real grievances of the people and do something really beneficial to them. But then the irony of fate is such that when a good Governor has fitted himself for the task by his five years' schooling in this land his term of office expires and a new Governor is sent to rule in his place and he comes here and finds himself like a fish out of water. If the post of the Governor had depended on the suffrage of the people then surely the Governor would have at first to fit himself for the post and then have it and the Governorship of a Province in India would not have been the bed-rock on which many an intelligent Englishman have foundered.

Now, Lord Carmichael was a Governor whose method of

tackling Indian problems, at least the method followed by him during the first-half of his rule, is worthy of emulation. When he came to Bengal he came determined to do such a good turn to that country that he might be lovingly remembered by her people even long after he had left. With this end in view from the very beginning of his rule he consulted non-official Indians, who were known to hold views in opposition to the Government of the day, whenever any new measure affecting the people was sought to be taken. He mixed freely with Indian gentlemen, gave friendly calls at their residences and sometimes he even put on the *dhoti* and the *chadar* to show that he had become one of them. Any sense of vanity as to the coat and trousers being his national dress did not stand in his way. In the midst of his multifarious duties he learnt the Bengali language and sometimes addressed the people in Bengali, and, quoted Sanskrit verses in his speeches instead of Latin and Greek. For instance, he replied in Bengali to the addresses presented to him by the Dacca Saraswat Samaj, the Pandits of Navadwip and the Calcutta Sanskrit Culture Convocation in 1913-14. By his close contact with the rural people of Bengal he came to realise that scarcity of drinking water was one of the crying needs of the rural people and the transfer of the Road Cess funds from the general coffers of the Government was largely due to his intervention. He also came to understand that India's economic salvation lay in her use of her indigenous manufactured goods and he was so large-hearted and conscientious a man that he not only attended Swadeshi exhibitions but took a leading part in their opening ceremonies. One can well imagine the volume of the official opposition to such conduct on the part of a Governor of a Province in India, and for Lord Carmichael the strength of mind of an Odysseus was required to save himself from the official siren-song. Ultimately, however, he succumbed to their influence and his subordinates became the masters of the situation. So that, inspite of his excellent heart he could do very little for the people. But that is another story.

It is widely known that Lord Carmichael had much regard for Babu Moti Lal Ghose. He did not conceal it from anyone. At least during the first two years of his Governorship no Bengali gentleman was more in his confidence than Babu Moti Lal Ghose. As soon as His Lordship arrived in Calcutta from Madras he sought him out, evidently through the good offices of his Private Secretary Mr. W. R. Gourlay, with whom Moti Lal was on very intimate terms. As soon as they met they were closetted together in the Government House for nearly two hours, when Moti Lal gave his Lordship a vivid description of the condition of Bengal and its wants and grievances, and it made a deep impression on his mind. Moti Lal said that His Lordship would earn the fervent gratitude of the people of Bengal if he could do only two things during his tenure of office—(1) improve the sanitation of the country, and (2) put the Police under check. His Lordship promised that he would do his best.

When Lord Carmichael went up to Darjeeling Moti Lal wrote to Mr. Gourlay making some enquiries about the Governor. It brought the following autograph letter in reply from His Excellency :—

“GOVERNMENT HOUSE,  
Darjeeling 18th May, 1912.

“DEAR MR. MOTI LAL GHOSE,

Mr. Gourlay showed me a letter he had got from you about a fortnight ago, which interested and pleased me very much. I did not write to you at the time as I was very busy, and there was no real need to do so. But I hope you will forgive my trespassing on your time for a few minutes now.

I want to tell you that I shall always be more than grateful to you, if you directly or indirectly let me know of anything to which you think I ought to attend. I dare say I shall often learn of such things from the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. I have done so already. I am sincerely anxious to help any one who is trying to make Bengal a happier place for its people to live in. I know that many people must be disappointed with me,

for I know I shall never be able to do as much as many people expect. They may even be angry with me. I shan't blame them, for people ought to expect more than is possible from every one put in authority. It is only by doing so that they are able gradually to get what is possible. And in the case of a Governor it is often I fancy only because he is blamed that he is able to get others whose advice he must often listen to even when sometimes he least trusts it to agree to try things he thinks worth-trying. But I do want to do all I can and that all must be greater or less according as those who know where the need lies tell me what they know. I do not suppose that even if a Governor came here full of local knowledge instead of coming here as I do ignorant of even the language of my neighbours he could do a tenth part of what he would like to do. There are many things to hamper one. Possibly it is right that for the present they should be there. Until they are removed the march of progress must seem slow ; especially is this the case in things to do with self-government and even with education or anything that depends for the most part on how men think. In every country men who realise what is good for their fellows have to fret and fret waiting for those who would benefit the most if they only knew it to realise the truth, and over and over again those who know what is best and want to take it have to take not even the second best or the third best but something which is hardly good at all, because their poor short-sighted neighbours can't see clearly. There are some things I hope which a Governor may fairly insist on doing when he sees his way, but in many things the most he can do and probably that is often better than what he would like to do is to try and persuade people to look at things from a different standpoint from what they have done. My great desire while here is that I may be able to lead all I can to widen their outlook and to look ahead as far as they can. But I won't waste your time, only thank you for your kind message and hope you are still getting stronger. Gourlay says he does not think you are likely to come up here, but if you do I hope you will let me know that we may meet. In any case though I hope we may meet in Calcutta.

Yours very sincerely,  
CARMICHAEL."



Moti Lal gradually became very familiar with Lord Carmichael, he would be summoned by His Excellency every now and then to the Government House. The following incident narrated by Moti Lal will be interesting :—

“The writer of this (Moti Lal) one day in summer was summoned to the Government House by the late Governor of Bengal. It was very hot, and I found Lord Carmichael rather uncomfortable on account of the heat wave. I remarked, ‘It seems your Excellency is perspiring.’ ‘Yes, it is awfully hot,’ said he. I said, ‘But why don’t you take to our *dhoti* and shirt? Your Excellency can see that we are more comfortable in our light costume.’ Lord Carmichael replied in a petulant tone, ‘We don’t use your *dhoti* and shirts because we are a stupid people.’ ”

An Englishman, continued Moti Lal, would rather be roasted like a fowl by the Indian heat than give up his thick and heavy clothing. He further told His Excellency how the Indians kept their bodies cool during the hot season by rubbing them with mustard and other kinds of oil. But this is a luxury, which, he feared, it is not the lot of an Englishman in India ever to enjoy. For, he will never agree to show his bare body to his Indian *khansama* and get it massaged by him. Indeed the idea is, Moti Lal said, so he was told by some Englishmen, that their prestige would be gone and they would be regarded as ordinary human beings by the “natives” if the latter came to see that their masters, when divested of their clothes, looked just like themselves!

To Lord Ronaldshay also Moti Lal gave a similar advice. But of that later.

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## CHAPTER XXXV

### URBAN VERSUS RURAL SANITATION

All-India Sanitary Conference—Moti Lal a Delegate—Sanitation First, Education Afterwards—Economic Improvement above All.

The first All-India Sanitary Conference was held at Bombay in 1911. The second session was held at Madras in 1912. Of the more than four scores of delegates who attended the Madras Conference only a dozen or fourteen were Indians and the rest were Englishmen. The Indians also were mostly officials or semi-officials, townspeople having very little or no experience of village life. The majority of the Englishmen were officials belonging to the Medical Service and the rest were Engineers. Babu Moti Lal Ghose who was selected as delegate through the intervention of Lord Carmichael was the only non-official member having actual experience of village life. So, while most of the delegates were anxious for contributing to the comfort and luxury of those living in the towns and cities, Moti Lal took up the case for the villages. "The townspeople," he said at the Conference, "can protect themselves from the inroads of various diseases without outside help; but the millions residing in the interior, must die like fleas or convert themselves into a nation of invalids unless they receive substantial assistance from the Government."

It seems Moti Lal's efforts in this matter did not go in vain. For, in the third session of the Conference which was held at Lucknow in 1914 a separate section was devoted to rural sanitation presided over by Sir Harcourt Butler, Governor of the United Provinces.

At the time when the Sanitary Conference was held in Madras the prevailing notion among medical and sanitary officers in India was that it was by spreading popular education in public health that the people of India could be saved from the clutches of the pestilence which was creating such a terrible havoc among them. It was assumed that they were utterly ignorant even of the elementary principles of hygiene

and hence they brought various deadly diseases on themselves. At the Madras Conference a Medical Officer, Major J. G. N. Stokes, I.M.S., read a paper on this subject and submitted a proposal to the effect that school-masters, members of municipalities, vaccinators and policemen should be given a training in the rudiments of hygiene and they should be competent to impart their knowledge to the mass of the population.

Thereupon Moti Lal observed that the people of India knew as much as the brilliant galaxy of medical men present at the Conference did, that by drinking pure water or keeping their villages well-drained and free from jungle they could preserve their health better ; but if they did not do it, it was not because of their ignorance of simple hygienic laws but because they were too poor to improve their sanitary surroundings, and the Government was far from liberal in its help in this respect. If low class villagers were found to bathe, now and then, in the same tank with 'their buffaloes, as the President of the Conference had observed, it was due to the fact, remarked Moti Lal, that they had perhaps got only one tank for drinking, washing and other purposes and were thus quite helpless in the matter. So Moti Lal said that the real remedy against the decimation of the 'people by pestilential maladies did not lie in popular education in public health, though no doubt it had its great value, but in practical measures of sanitation such as supply of pure drinking water, good drainage, clearing of jungles, and above all, improvement of the economic condition of the bulk of the population.

Indeed, the first and foremost duty of the powers that be should be to improve the economic condition of the people. If the people are economically independent, if they are not in a state of perpetual famine and constantly struggling for keeping their body and soul together but have enough money for their food and raiment and to spare, Governments will find that nine-tenths of their troubles are gone. Governments will find that such happy and contented people will not only look after their own sanitation and education but will also carry

out many things which it is the function and the duty of the Government to do. If on the other hand the people are ever in want of money, far from being a helping hand to the Government they are a clog on the wheels of Government. For a people of a subject country poverty is the worst imaginable evil. Poverty brings about bad sanitation ; bad sanitation leads to ill-health ; ill-health stands in the way of education and leads to ignorance and weakness ; and ignorance and weakness are followed by poverty—there is hardly any escape from this vicious circle.

Dr. W. G. King, formerly a Sanitary Commissioner with the Government of Madras and Dr. W. J. Simpson, Professor of Hygiene, King's College, wrote a joint letter to the *Times* of London in January 1913 regarding the question of Indian sanitation. In that letter they complained that Reuter did not wire to the London papers Lord Pentland's address at the Madras Sanitary Conference and the part which Babu Moti Lal Ghose took in its proceedings. The doctors wrote that both His Excellency and Babu Moti Lal Ghose, who was a delegate from Bengal, pleaded that the sanitary condition of the rural population demanded greater attention than that of the urban, the latter urging that the people must first be saved from an appalling death-rate from preventible diseases and then educated.

Following is an extract from the letter published in the *Times* :—

“Sir—We attempted in your issue of October 14 to show the absurdity of a scheme advanced by the Government of India which would limit the executive sanitary service to municipalities, or 7 per cent. of the population, whilst the rural population, amounting to 93 per cent. (or 227 millions) and admittedly suffering from an appalling death-rate from preventible disease, is, with a blind faith in academic methods, left to find salvation in education.

“In your telegram of December 31, it is now reported that these opinions have evoked ‘adverse criticism’ in India.

"It is, however, curious that in a telegram purporting to describe the Sanitary Conference at Madras and making special reference to 'adverse criticism' of our views, no reference is made to Lord Pentland's closing address, in which they were fully justified. He stated:—'In a country like this, where so large a percentage of the population live under rural conditions, there may be some danger that the clamant needs of the towns and centres of industry may over-shadow interests and wants. The importance of a pure water-supply and other essentials of health is as vital to the villages as it is to the large towns and cities.'

"Further Babu Moti Lal Ghose, the editor of a well-known Indian journal, while stating that he yielded to none in his desire for spread of education, in asserting the rights of rural areas, twitted the President in an amusing parable of 'two wives' on his obvious disregard of the interests of practical sanitation, and appealed to him to 'show more substantial tokens of his love for his neglected wife Sanitation. . . . . For, in one sense Sanitation demands more attention than Education.' He specially called attention to the unchecked loss of life as influencing adversely the economic advance of the country and he challenged that officer (the President) to show that Indians did not understand ordinary hygienic laws; he maintained it was not academic ignorance of these laws which was at the root of the great mortality but the absence of practical sanitation as applied to communities. Such contentions but illustrate how deeply the Education Department has blundered in not distinguishing between personal hygiene and the sanitation of communities, and has aggravated this by insisting that the latter must wait for the development of the former at the hands of the school-master."

It is certainly very gratifying to note that Babu Moti Lal's efforts in drawing the attention of the authorities to the sad condition of the rural population did not go in vain. Indeed all the points that he urged upon the President were more or less attended to. The necessity of supplying pure water and other essentials of health in rural areas was officially acknowledged in the Imperial and Provincial Budgets of the following year and considerable grants were made for the purpose. The Cess money was also transferred to the District Boards.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### PUBLIC SERVICES COMMISSION AGAIN

Moti Lal's Note for Indianisation—His Memorandum on the Services—Press Opinion.

A Royal Commission on Public Services in India came to this country in 1912-13. It was composed of Lord Islington, President ; Earl of Ronaldshay, Sir Murray Hammick, Sir Theodore Morrison, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Hon. Mr. W. C. Madge, Hon. Mr. G. K. Gokhale, Hon. Mr. B. Choubal, Mr. Justice Abdur Rahim, Mr. H. L. Fisher and Hon. Mr. F. G. Sly, Members.

It may be remembered that it was the Public Services Commission of 1889 which had brought Moti Lal into prominence before the public eye. So it was expected that this time also he would take a prominent part. But in January, 1913 when the Commission came to Calcutta Moti Lal had been lying ill and this prevented him from accepting the invitation of the Chairman of the Royal Public Services Commission to appear before the Commission in Calcutta for the purpose of giving oral evidence on the subject of the Indian and Provincial services. But in his written note and in the columns of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* he emphasised the fact that in violation of Queen Victoria's famous Proclamation of 1858 Indians had been all but ostracized from all the higher appointments. He tried to impress upon the powers that be that there should be simultaneous examinations in England as well as in India for admission to the Covenanted Civil Service, that half the District Magistrateships and three-fourths of the District Judgeships should be reserved for the children of the soil, that two of the Secretaries to Government and all the Under-Secretaries should be Indians, that one of the Deputy Inspector-Generals of Police should be an Indian and that half the appointments of District Superintendents of Police, should be reserved for our countrymen.

Viewed from the modern political standpoint Moti Lal's demands appear to be too moderate, but in his time even these were considered as too much.

Moti Lal submitted a lengthy memorandum on Indian and Provincial Civil Services to the Public Services Commission in 1913 when the Commission visited Calcutta. In his memorandum he strongly supported simultaneous Civil Service examinations in England and India. He also suggested that if this measure could not be introduced the Statutory Civil Service should be revived on the competitive principle, that is, the method of recruitment should be open competitive examination, successful candidates being classified in one list according to merit and no difference being made between them and England passed Civilians in respect of pay, powers, pensions and status.

Moti Lal also recommended a reduction of pay and number of Civilians. While arguing in favour of the reduction of pay he said that the highest pay of the members of the Ceylonese Civil Service was not more than Rs. 2,000 per mensem. He urged that India should be governed not only efficiently but also according to her means. He pointed out that the average annual income per head of the Indians was only between Rs. 24 and Rs. 27 and so they were not fit to maintain such a costly public service as they were doing. He suggested that the crushing nature of the cost which the maintenance of the public services entailed on the people could be minimised by employment of cheap indigenous talent more largely for carrying on the administration of the country, and by reducing the pay and number of foreign Civilians. He protested against the allegation of Civilian witnesses that the character of the Indian administration was English. He also said that English University education was not necessary to make good administrators in India.

Moti Lal's memorandum created a flutter in official circles and it was heartily received by the Indian press. The *Indian Daily News*, then an influential Anglo-Indian daily paper published the memorandum *in extenso* and in course of its

comments observed that "it gives the case for simultaneous examination as ably as we have seen it put." The *Modern Review* of Srijut Ramananda Chatterjee observed that "Babu Moti Lal Ghose's memorandum is a very able and convincing production." The *Indian Patriot* of Madras and the *Indu Prokash* of Bombay wrote long leaders in appreciation of the memorandum and Mr. D. E. Wacha of Bombay who was considered as an authority on most Indian questions wrote :—

"Babu Moti Lal has done rightly in going through the question. Mr. Dadabhoy has, I believe, written privately on this and pointed out how the drain arises and how it can be removed. Speaking personally for myself, I do say that the evidence of Babu Moti Lal is excellent, reasonable and elaborate."

Moti Lal's memorandum, his answers to the questions and a long series of articles written by him on the subject and published as leaders in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, were after some time reprinted and sold in a book form. Within a few months of their publication all the copies were sold off.

It seems Moti Lal's memorandum and articles in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* had their desired effect to some extent at least. For in later years the principle of simultaneous Civil Service examinations in England and India was accepted by Government and at present the examinations for the Indian Civil Service are held both in England and in India. We are fondly looking forward to the day when the examinations will be held in India only.

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## CHAPTER XXXVII

### THE AMRITA BAZAR PATRIKA CONTEMPT CASE

Barisal Conspiracy Case—Police and C. I. D. Criticised by Patrika—Case Against Patrika for Commenting on Pending Proceedings—Dismissed With Costs—Anglo-Indian Press Comments.

• In May, 1913 appeared some editorial paragraphs and articles in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* commenting on what was known as the *Barisal Conspiracy Case* in which as many as forty-four accused persons were charged under Section 121A of the Indian Penal Code—the comments were published at a time when the case was yet pending before the Additional Magistrate of Barisal.

On the 12th May, 1913 Mr. Lionel Hewitt Colson, Special Superintendent, Intelligence Branch, Criminal Investigation Department, Indian Police Service, filed a petition of complaint in the Court of the Additional Magistrate of Barisal, alleging that one Girindra Mohan Das and forty-three others were guilty of offences under Section 121A of the Indian Penal Code. The Magistrate, Mr. Nelson, examined the complainant on oath, recorded his deposition and directed certain warrants to be issued. In the meantime some editorial paragraphs and articles were published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* between 19th and 30th May, commenting on the action of the Police in taking a photograph of one Narendra Mohan Sen, an accused in that case, while he was in the lock-up, refusal of the Court to give copies of the petition of complaint, sworn deposition of complainant and the Government sanction, to another accused named Sasanka Mohan Ghose, house-searches and arrests at Barisal and some other connected matters.

Following are some extracts from one of the articles:—

“Three weeks ago we first heard of the alleged Barisal Conspiracy Case from a very high official. Our informant himself was not quite sure of the correctness of his information which was based on rumour, though

it seemed to him to be a well-founded one. He enquired of us if we knew anything about the matter, and we pleaded ignorance. We, however, told him that such a thing could not happen so long as Bengal was under the control of a Governor like Lord Carmichael ; for, His Excellency would never allow the peace of the province to be disturbed, which he has established by his tact, judgment and ardent sympathy. But it is now clear that we proved a false prophet ; and our deep disappointment at the institution of the case may better be imagined than described.

“Fancy the sensational and terror-striking character of the present movements of the Criminal Intelligence Department. A number of the alleged accused were not hiding themselves like criminals but moving in society as honest people. One of them, we are told, is a Headmaster of a High School who was proceeding home to enjoy his summer holidays and was arrested in a railway train. Another, a school Pundit, was arrested while attending on his sick relations. A boy reading in the second class of the Sitakund School is also under Police custody ; and so is another boy who is a student of the Campbell Medical School living in Serpentine Lane, Calcutta. And so on. If these men and boys were really members of a dangerous conspiracy, it is reasonable to suppose that the fact would have oozed out and the school authorities or committees would have never permitted them to hold responsible posts or read in any Aided or Government schools. And why were they arrested clandestinely and put in *hajat*, without their or their friends knowing anything of the nature of the evidence the Police has got against them? Such a procedure is bound to unsettle the public mind.

“Mark then the sense of proportion and propriety of the C. I. D. officials. The accused consisting of a few unarmed Bengalees, all under Police custody, were each of them surrounded by a separate batch of armed Gurkhas! Was not this military demonstration perfectly unnecessary and quite ridiculous? We also learn that some of the accused were brought from Chittagong, Noakhali and other places to Barisal handcuffed and tied with a rope from behind. Why this needless cruelty? Are the suffragist conspirators being treated in this fashion in England? The only object it served was to strike terror among the people, which certainly

is not calculated to evoke their affection for the Administration.

"Fancy also the accused, including a school-boy reading in the Second Class, charged with waging war against the King! Did they conspire to attack Fort William with Maxim Guns and Gatlings?

"Ponder, again, on the wide-spread nature of the alleged conspiracy. It extends from Chittagong to Calcutta. Houses in various parts of Backergung, Dacca, Chittagong, Noakhali and Calcutta have been searched, and we have no doubt other districts will in due course come in for their share of the trouble. And one wonders if a large number of people,—if not the whole nation,—will gradually be sought to be implicated in the conspiracy, and the whole country turned upside down!

"What is most incomprehensible to us is, why should the accused *Bhadraloke* dacoits be dealt with in a different manner from the professional dacoits. A dacoit is a dacoit whether he belongs to a respectable or a criminal class. The country is not sought to be convulsed by the display of military force or house-searches, when ordinary dacoits are hauled up by the Police; nor are they tried by a Special Magistrate. Why could not this procedure be also adopted in regard to *Bhadralokes*, when they are charged with dacoity or any other serious crime! And is it not unfair and unjust that an accused should be treated as a criminal of the worst type before he is put on his trial and convicted? Why should the defendants in the present case, at least such of them against whom there is no positive evidence, be handcuffed, or refused bail, and made to rot in jail before they have been found guilty?.

"We appeal to Lord Carmichael to go through the Police papers himself and study the matter with that serious and undivided attention which it deserves. Indeed, he has a grave responsibility in this connection. If His Excellency is convinced that a *prima facie* case has been made out, the accused must stand their trial. But in that case, every facility should be given to them to defend themselves. The odds are heavily against them. The prosecution will be backed by the unlimited resources of the Government; but the poor wretches in the position of the defendants are not only without friends or funds, but their personal liberty has been taken away from them. The fight is thus most unequal, and the Government should give them every reasonable

opportunity to clear their characters, if they are innocent. If we are correctly informed, in England the State provides legal help for undefended accused in important cases. Why should not our Government also follow the same generous policy by which it would raise itself in the estimation of the public?"

The depth of feeling with which the above was written created a great impression. The public were indignant. Anglo-Indian papers fell foul of the *Patrika* and charged it with commenting on a case which was, according to them, *sub judice* and thus obstructing the course of justice ; and yet at the same time they justified the proceedings of the Police in arresting people and treating them like worst criminals, though they had not yet been tried and convicted. While the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, in consonance with the principles of British jurisprudence, assumed the persons arrested as innocent till their guilt was established in a court of law and criticised the action of the Police for their treatment of these persons, Anglo-Indian papers which wanted the head of the *Patrika* on a charger defied those salutary principles of British jurisprudence, assumed that the arrested persons were guilty and justified the action of the Police in treating the arrested persons in the way they had done.

The authorities thought that they could not sleep over the matter. The Chief Secretary to the Government informed the editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* that the report published in the paper alleging that a photograph was taken in the *hajat* of one of the arrested persons named Narendra Nath Sen was not correct. The letter of contradiction was published in the *Patrika* on the 24th May.

Within a fortnight, to be more precise, on Friday the 6th June, 1913 the Advocate General of Bengal (the Hon'ble Mr. G. H. B. Kenrick) with Mr. Buckland appeared before the Chief Justice (Sir Lawrence Jenkins) and Mr. Justice Asutosh Mukherjee in the Calcutta High Court and moved an application for the appointment of a Bench to hear an application for a rule to commit certain persons for contempt of court in

respect of articles commenting on pending proceedings published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.

On Wednesday June 18, 1913 a Special Bench of the Calcutta High Court presided over by the Chief Justice (Sir Lawrence Jenkins), Mr. Justice Stephen and Mr. Justice Asutosh Mukherjee sat to hear the case. Babu Moti Lal Ghose as editor and manager and Babu Tarit Kanti Biswas as printer and publisher of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* were called upon to show cause why they should not be committed to prison for contempt of court for publishing a series of articles commenting on the case of *Emperor v. Girindra Mohan Dass and others*, better known as the Barisal Conspiracy case which was then pending before Mr. Nelson, Additional District Magistrate of Barisal.

The Advocate General (the Hon'ble Mr. G. H. B. Kenrick) with Mr. Buckland represented the Crown. Mr. Jackson with Mr. St. John Stephen and Mr. K. N. Chaudhuri appeared for Babu Moti Lal Ghose ; Mr. B. Chakravarti with Mr. B. K. Lahiri, Mr. C. C. Ghose and Mr. J. C. Ghose represented Tarit Kanti Biswas.

At the outset Mr. Jackson (popularly known as "Tiger" Jackson) wanted an adjournment till some day in the next week. "As a matter of fact," he said, "my client was served on Sunday in the train at Kurseong and I have not had time to look at anything. If your Lordships look at the array of books on the other side your Lordships will see that it is absolutely necessary that I should have time to look into the matter and prepare whatever is necessary to meet the application."

The Advocate-General said that the whole of the proceedings were published in the Press on the 7th June and so Babu Moti Lal had information of the whole matter. He continued that on the 15th June Babu Moti Lal Ghose was personally served. Clerks charged with effecting service came to know from the Calcutta office of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* that Babu Moti Lal had gone to Darjeeling. So they went to

Darjeeling and heard that he had left for Kurseong. They followed him to Kurseong and effected the service there.

The Chief Justice said:—I have had an opportunity of looking at your affidavits in this case and I cannot see anything which is legal evidence that Babu Moti Lal Ghose is the editor of the paper.

Advocate-General:—In the affidavit of service it appears that when they went to the office of the paper to enquire for Babu Moti Lal Ghose, the editor and manager of the paper, the sub-editor said, 'Yes, the editor and manager is in Darjeeling.'

Chief Justice:—That will not do at all. It is a very serious matter. I have noticed the petition and it did not occur to me that you rely on the petition as pledging the oath of the Legal Remembrancer that to his actual knowledge Babu Moti Lal Ghose was the editor and manager.

Advocate-General:—That is his information as it appears.

Chief Justice:—You cannot do that in a criminal matter.

Advocate-General:—I have got from the Registrar of Joint-Stock Companies the original Articles of Association of the Company which show that Babu Moti Lal Ghose is one of the Directors.

Chief Justice:—You got leave from us on a representation which was made in good faith that you have proof that Babu Moti Lal Ghose was the editor and manager. You have not got that evidence.

Advocate-General:—There were similar proceedings in this Court against Babu Moti Lal Ghose in which he did not deny that he was the manager.

Chief Justice:—You have got your leave on these materials (pointing to the affidavits). If we find these materials do not justify that which is the essential fact in the case you cannot amplify that now. I am sure you do not want argument for that. That is elementary.

Advocate-General:—If your Lordships look at the affidavit of service it appears from the sub-editor himself.

Chief Justice:—Can you in a criminal matter use the information of a third party against the party impugned?

Advocate-General:—No. I agree with Your Lordship. I put it this way that having it on information that he is the editor and manager certainly it is for him to disprove that it is not a fact that he is the editor or manager.

Chief Justice:—How can a person be bound to deny that which is not evidence against him?

Advocate-General:—Your Lordships will allow me to put in a supplementary affidavit from the Registrar of Joint-Stock Companies with reference to Babu Moti Lal Ghose.

Chief Justice:—Nothing of that kind.

Ultimately the motion as against Babu Moti Lal Ghose was dismissed with costs, the Chief Justice holding that “materials necessary to fasten responsibility on him were wholly wanting.” The case against the printer and publisher was heard on its merits. That case also was dismissed with costs, the Judges holding that “in the present case no contempt justifying summary action on our part has been established.” Justice Sir Asutosh Mukherjee observed, “In my opinion these articles plainly do not constitute a contempt of this Court.”

This case led to the introduction of the Contempt of Court Bill in the Supreme Legislative Council of India, which laid down that the name of the editor should be published in each issue of a journal edited by him. But before the Bill could be passed the Great War broke out and the matter was deferred till 1926.

Though some of the Anglo-Indian papers had incited the Government to take action against the editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* there were others who resented this. The *Capital*, then edited probably by the late Mr. Shearly Tremearne, wrote as follows on the result of the case:—

“*Parturiunt montes, nascitur ridiculus mus.* No comment could be more appropriate than this old Latin tag to the failure of the official prosecution of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, for contempt for its articles deprecating the trial for conspiracy of certain *bhadralogs*

of Barisal. Those articles were written in a heightened style, but we have within very recent times read articles in the London papers far more provocative of the worst passions of human nature and far more derogatory to the Government of the day. Of course it will be argued that India is not England and that what is innocuous at Home is dangerous out here. Doubtless, but at the same time it must be remembered that the Indian Press is an offspring of the Press of Great Britain, and in the last degree imitative of the methods of its parents. Indian papers have learnt much from the way in which the journalistic opposition to Home Rule for Ireland has been conducted by Conservative papers in England and their Anglo-Indian gramophones. When these can curse and blaspheme with impunity, because they do not like a certain policy, which has the support of the majority in the House of Commons, and even go further and incite to armed rebellion, it is hard to blame an Indian paper for opposing with heated rhetoric a measure, which it rightly or wrongly, yet honestly, thinks will be subversive of the peace of the community.

"We are delighted to accept as sound the law of the Chief Justice and his learned colleagues. It is a powerful vindication of the liberty of the Press, of which the Indian Bureaucracy are so jealous, and strive so hard to curtail. For all that we pity the journalist who would have the temerity to run an outspoken paper in Simla or Delhi as long as Sir Reginald Craddock remains in charge of the portfolio of the Home Department. It were better that he had never been born."

The *Indian Daily News*, also edited by an Anglo-Indian commented on the case as follows:—

"The contempt case against the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* is of considerable importance to all newspapers, because it represents an oppressive method of procedure which has only been introduced of recent years. . . . This sort of legal bluff, as one may call it, began about the year 1903, and since then there has been an incessant controversy between the lawyers and the newspapers as to what the lawyers called 'trial by newspapers.' The lawyers invented the idea that a twentieth century jury might be prejudiced by reading something—whether true or not was immaterial—about the prisoner. They proposed to stop all allusions to a current topic in the interest or supposed interest of justice. . . . The idea that publication in a newspaper of what everyone is saying is calculated to prejudice the trial or influence



a jury or deter people from giving evidence is a relic of a time when the world was more ignorant than it is. . . . . Mr. Justice Phillimore ridiculed the idea of contempt and said that the world had gone mad about contempt. . . . . We venture to say that the whole idea of 'trial by newspaper' is a legal fiction and that, in fact, neither the prisoner nor anyone else is ever injured by anything that is said. Juries are honest enough to see to that and the whole idea is based on improbabilities."

• The *Englishman*, however, took a very adverse view of the judgment and wrote a long tirade against the High Court of Calcutta which according to that paper "had dealt a blow at the Government which had brought it into existence." It considered the decision of the case as "heartening the Nationalists, and also the Extremists, who profit, naturally, from every victory won by the former." Wrote the *Englishman*, while commenting on this case:—

"The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* is certainly the best known among Europeans. It is considered both a bane and a blessing—a bane, because, whether consciously or unconsciously, it seems to be always stirring the racial prejudice. But it is a blessing for two reasons. One of them, by no means to be neglected in a country which is wanting in humour, is its extreme pawkiness. There may be an appearance of mischief in its attacks upon the Government and upon official personages but these are generally delivered with so great a sense of the ridiculous and such a witty choice of language that even those who are hurt most cannot avoid laughter. The other reason why the *Patrika* is so largely read by Europeans is because of the violent honesty with which it is accustomed to reveal the faction fights and intrigues in the very party which it claims to represent. But for the *Patrika* the impression might have got abroad that the agitators were a united and formidable body under a strict sense of discipline and owing unquestioned obedience to a leader. Now we know that there is no discipline and no leader, and that petty jealousies and ambitions hamper the path of all the local Garibaldies. The Editor of the *Patrika* seemed to be a kind of mischievous sprite—according to the High Court he is also a phantom without a name—never so happy as when shooting arrows and quite indifferent whether he pierces friend or foe." .

The fact is that at the time when the Barisal Conspiracy Case and as a corollary to it the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* contempt case were heard there was no law as now prescribing the name of the editor to be published in every issue of a newspaper, and as such the name of Babu Moti Lal Ghose did not appear anywhere in the paper as its editor, though as a matter of fact the public knew that he was the editor of the paper.

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### MOTILAL AS A PUBLIC MAN

Government's Educational Policy—Moti Lal's Speech—Public Activities  
—Damodar Floods.

In the middle of 1913 the Government of India wanted to introduce certain changes in the administration of the Calcutta University. The University Act of 1904 had set up the Executive Government above the body corporate of the Universities and had officialised them both in their international constitution and external relations. A semblance of control and authority was left in the hand of the University under this Act of Lord Curzon. But in 1913 proposals were made for taking away from the University the little power that was left in its hand. It was proposed that the power of giving recognition to Secondary Schools be taken away from the University and the School Final be substituted for the Matriculation examination. The proposal raised a storm of protest in the country and meetings were held far and near disapproving of the proposed changes.

In the columns of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* it was written :—

“The new Educational policy means nothing but tightening the iron grip of officialdom and civiliamdom, stunting of our manhood and disaster to the cause of the education of our children all along.”

On Monday the 28th of July a public meeting of the people of Bengal was held at the Town Hall of Calcutta to

consider this new educational policy of the Government of India. Preparations for this meeting had been going on for long and protest meetings had been held in almost all the important districts and subdivisions of the presidency at which delegates were elected. On the motion of Dr. Rash Behari Ghose, Raja Peary Mohon Mukherjee of Uttarpura took the chair. Among the speakers there were Sriyuts Bhupendra Nath Basu, Heramba Chandra Maitra, Byomcase Chakravarti, Ambica Charan Mazumdar, Surendra Nath Banerjea, Moti Lal Ghose, Hirendra Nath Datta, Dr. Nil Ratan Sircar and others. Several resolutions were passed protesting against the policy of the Government to exclude persons taking part in political movements from appointment as University professors, to interfere unnecessarily with the internal administration of the University and against other Government measures.

Babu Moti Lal Ghose delivered a very highly interesting and humorous speech in seconding the resolution moved by Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea urging on the Government to abandon their scheme of transferring the power of recognition of Secondary Schools for the purposes of the Matriculation Examination from the University to the Local Government. He said :—

“The woman who professes greater love for a child than its mother is regarded as a witch. Is it not a queer phenomenon that alien officials should claim greater solicitude and greater tenderness for the welfare of our children than their own countrymen who are their natural guardians? We wonder how would the English people take it if a number of say Japanese officials were to tell them to place the education of English students in their hands and not in those of the English Universities. But everything is possible in India.”

Moti Lal's activities were now varied and multifarious. In the beginning of his career he was more or less confined to his desk and was averse to joining public meetings. But gradually he was dragged out of his editorial sanctum, and about the time of which I am writing he was associated with almost every matter in which the public were interested. Not

only had he to attend public meetings and functions and speak to large audiences, he had also to serve in many Committees of public organisations or associations. It is not possible to describe in detail the functions which he had to attend or over which he had to preside. He was dragged from one end of the city to the other and had to visit the four corners of the city and its suburbs also in order to keep his public engagements. These included prize distributions in schools, anniversaries of clubs, farewell or "at home" parties, educative lectures on social or political or other subjects, religious demonstrations, like *Sankirtans*, *Puja*, etc., demonstrations of physical feats and what not. The writer remembers to have attended many such functions with Moti Lal. One such function which just comes up to my mind was held at Chandernagar where Moti Lal presided over the final game of the *Bangiya Vel-dig-dig Pratiyogila* or the Bengal *Vel-dig-dig* competition (*Vel-dig-dig* or *Hadu-dudu* is an Indian game). And it was here that the writer who accompanied Moti Lal to Chandernagar saw Moti Lal Ghose of the *Patrika* holding communion with Moti Lal Roy of the *Prabartak* (a Bengali periodical). Another such function (to mention one among a number) to which the writer accompanied Moti Lal was the demonstration lecture of Srijut Krishna Chandra Ghose Vedanta-chintamani on the subject of *Sangiter Mukti Banam Sangiter Bandhan* (i.e., Emancipation of Music Versus Confinement of Music). This was a lecture delivered at the pavilion of a Calcutta theatre by the above-named gentleman under the auspices of a society named *Sangit-Parishad Vidyalaya*, whose aim was to propagate classical Indian music amongst the Indian people. Moti Lal was a lover of classical music like *Dhrupad* and *Kheyal*, though he liked *Kirtan* also. And hence he was requested to preside over the meeting where this lecture was delivered. But space does not permit me to refer to many such meetings. I shall only refer to one incident during this period.

The 8th of August, 1913 was a fateful day in the annals of Bengal. Owing to a sudden rise in the river Damodar

there was a flood in Burdwan which rendered thousands upon thousands of men, women and children utterly destitute, railway lines were broken, cattle were washed away and houses collapsed in any number. So much so that the flood was described as an unprecedented one, it formed the topic of conversation in society, high or low, newspapers devoted column after column to the descriptions of the floods and appealed for funds for the relief of the distressed. Meetings were also held far and near with the object of raising funds. The floods created such a sensation that Matriculation and Intermediate examinees of the next term had essays written by their teachers on the subject and committed them to memory in expectation that they would be asked to write essays on the subject at their examinations.

Relief work was undertaken vigorously by patriotic Bengalis. Babu Moti Lal Ghose wrote a series of articles on the floods in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* appealing both to the Government and the people for giving succour to the flood-stricken. Several organisations were started for relief works and many existing organisations like, say, the Ramkrishna Mission took up the relief operations. A public meeting was held at the Town Hall of Bengal presided over by the then Governor of Bengal, Lord Carmichael. An Executive Committee with Chief Justice Sir Lawrence Jenkins as President for raising funds in aid of the sufferers was formed. Moti Lal was one of the members of the Committee and spoke feelingly on the occasion appealing to the Governor to come forward to help the distressed. "May we hope," he asked the Governor, "that if we can raise one *lakh* of rupees the Government will be graciously pleased to add nine *lakhs* more to it from the public exchequer? My reply to those who say that the Government cannot spend the general tax-payers' money for such a purpose is—ask the tax-paying public, take a plebescite among them, and I can guarantee that 99 per cent. of them will cheerfully permit the custodian of their money, the Government, to spend it freely for this good and noble cause." He also impressed upon the Governor the necessity of relax-

ing the hard and fast rules of the sunset law in the case of the landlords affected by the flood.

It may be said in passing that those were days when Governors and Chief Justices felt for the misery of the people whose destiny lay in their hands. They could freely mix with them and their leaders and in this respect Lord Carmichael and Sir Lawrence Jenkins were exemplary, so much so that Lord Carmichael opened the Swadeshi Mela at 172, Bowbazar Street on the 5th September, 1913 and in doing so delivered a long speech encouraging the use of Swadeshi goods.

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## CHAPTER XXXIX

### THE GREAT WAR

Moti Lal Co-operates with Government—Recruiting Bengali Soldiers and Volunteers—Braveries of Bengalis Recalled—Disillusioned at the End of the War—A Confirmed Opponent of Government.

The Great War broke out in the middle of 1914. To be precise on the 4th of August, 1914 it was declared by His Majesty King George V that England was now at war with Germany. The whole of India was at once thrown into a state of excitement. The War became the chief topic of conversation among all classes of people and the journalists were no exception to the rule. As a matter of fact it was through the newspapers that people came to know of the war and to the newspapers they went for knowing more and more about the day to day progress of the war.

Within a fortnight after the declaration of the War a meeting of all sections of Indians, chief among whom were Hindus, Mahomedans and Parsis, residing in Calcutta and suburbs was held in the Calcutta Town Hall under the presidentship of Maharajadhiraj Bejoy Chand Mahatap Bahadur of Burdwan to give expression to their feeling of loyalty and offer their services in the defence of the Empire.

The Raja of Kakina moved a resolution for co-operation with the Government in the defence of the Empire and asking Indians to enlist as Volunteers. Moti Lal, whose motto had been to oppose and oppose the Government, thought that this was an occasion when Indians ought to co-operate with the Government. So he supported the motion of the Raja of Kakina. He called upon the Government to permit Indians to be enlisted as volunteers. He said :—

“The reason why Indians were not allowed to enlist themselves as volunteers was not their unfitness but because they were not trusted. It was the Bengalees who first invited the present rulers to this country and it was with their help that the East India Company conquered Bengal and Behar. The rulers had, therefore, no ground to suspect the Indians. Here was an opportunity for the wise rulers to establish the British rule permanently on the hearts of the people by conferring on them the privilege of enlisting themselves as volunteers for the defence of the Empire.”

The Government were slow to accept Babu Moti Lal's advice. They damped the enthusiasm of the people by refusing to allow them the privilege of being volunteers though they had wanted to serve as such. They, however, agreed to utilize the services of 2000 Bengali youths for an ambulance corps. It was after a good deal of agitation that good counsel prevailed and the Government consented to form a Bengali regiment.

Babu Moti Lal Ghose was one of the members of the Executive Committee formed to invite recruits and take steps for the organisation of the Bengalee Double Company. Dr. S. K. Mullick who was the Secretary of this Committee often used to meet Babu Moti Lal and hold consultations with him regarding the work of recruitment. Dr. Mullick's indefatigable energy resulted in the recruitment of a substantial number of Bengali *bhadraloks* who went to the actual war-front and proved that Bengal could help the Empire not with money but with men also. Recruitment meetings were held here, there and everywhere. Moti Lal addressed many of these meetings or presided over them. To give a hearty send-

off to the first batch of Bengali soldiers and for recruitment of fresh batches a crowded meeting was held at the Star Theatre, Calcutta about the middle of September in 1916 under the presidency of Babu Moti Lal Ghose. The enthusiasm among the people was so very great that the seats were occupied long before the advertised hour and a few minutes before the proceedings commenced the spacious auditorium was over-crowded, there being not even standing room. Babu Moti Lal Ghose delivered a long speech. The letter issued over the signatures of Messrs. B. Chakravarti, C. R. Das and J. Chaudhury inviting recruits began thus:—

“This is the first time in the history of British rule in India that the Government has decided to admit Bengalis into the army.”

This statement, said Babu Moti Lal, was not correct. He quoted Heber's Indian Journal (1824-25) to show that “that little army with which Lord Clive did such wonders was raised chiefly from Bengal.” It was thus the Bengalis, who, he said, had played such an important part in securing the Empire of India to the present rulers of the country. Moti Lal also quoted Walter Hamilton's *Gazetteer* of 1815, which said:

“The native Bengalis are generally stigmatised as pusillanimous and cowardly; but it should not be forgotten that at an early period of our military history in India, they almost formed several of our battalions, and distinguished themselves as brave and active soldiers.”

If Bengal, continued Babu Moti Lal, could furnish in 1765 “battalions which distinguished themselves as brave and active soldiers” there was no reason why she would not be able to do so in 1916. He quoted the instance of three brave Bengalees—the late Babu Peary Mohan Banerjee, known as the fighting Munsiff, who did immense service to the British cause during the Sepoy mutiny as the leader of a military force he had himself raised, the late Babu Suresh Chandra Biswas who began as a Private in the Brazilian army and rose to the position of a Colonel for his bravery and heroism and last, but not the least, the Bengali youth Jogendra Nath Sen of



Chandernagore who entered as a Private in a British regiment during the then present war and died in France in a trench. He exhorted the youngmen to follow the teachings of the *Geeta* and come forward to join the army in hundreds and thousands. At the end of his speech he quoted a passage from Colonel Leslie's address to the Eurasians in which he had cried shame upon that community for failing to find 240 Anglo-Indian recruits for His Majesty's forces and he declared that it were better that the whole Bengali race were drowned in the high sea than that such humiliating words should be addressed to them.

Moti Lal was closely associated with Dr. S. K. Mullick in his activities in connection with raising volunteers from Bengal for going to the War. In fact he attended and addressed many recruiting meetings. Bengalees, he had all along maintained, had been a brave people, and here was, he said, an opportunity of proving this to the hilt. Like Mahatma Gandhi and many other Indian leaders he firmly believed in the assurances given from responsible quarters that if India helped Britain in her hour of need her services would not go unrewarded. He could never conceive that as the war would be over England would resume her own form, as the saying goes in Bengal, and, thus, he whole-heartedly co-operated with the Government in their activities in connection with the War. But, alas! like many other leaders of India he was also subsequently disillusioned and his faith in the uttered avocations of the Government was rudely shaken. He was at heart a non-co-operator with the Government from the very beginning; for a time, during their days of distress, he co-operated with them whole-heartedly; but when returning prosperity made them practically withdraw their promises, Moti Lal became a confirmed non-co-operator. Oppose, oppose and oppose the Government—had been his motto—and this he maintained to the last.

In this connection I remember a very interesting conversation that I had with him. Once I asked him—"Why do you oppose the Government at every step? Don't you think they

can do any good to us?" "Circumstanced as they are, I don't think they can and hence I am for criticising all measures of the Government—good, bad or indifferent," said he. "Criticise the bad measures by all means but why do you criticise even the good measures? Suppose, the Government decide upon opening a new hospital for Indians or a new bridge on a railway, which are manifestly good measures—how can you criticise them?"

"You have yet to learn," said he. "If the Government decide upon opening a new hospital we should be careful to see that it is not made for the purpose of providing employment to British doctors and Anglo-Indian nurses or pushing in India medicines manufactured in Great Britain. Again, if the Government are going to construct new bridges or railways I can swear orders will be placed for materials to British firms providing employment for British engineers and contractors. I can never forget that Britain is governing India not for the latter's interest but in the interest of the British people. So measures appearing to be beneficial when viewed superficially, may be really injurious to our country."

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## CHAPTER XL

### LATTER LIFE IN CALCUTTA

Moti Lal's Routine of Work—Regular In Everything—Moti Lal and the Writer.

Since 1914, young as I was, I had been the constant companion of Moti Lal. I was born (in 1897) in the house (2, Ananda Chatterjee Lane, Baghbazar) where he lived from 1874 till his death and I was brought up in that house under his grand-fatherly care. I had seen him work day to day from morn till night. He did everything according to strict routine. In my younger days I had slept in the same bed with him. Latterly I slept in the same room with him. He used

to go to bed very late in the night and before sleeping would sit up in bed for long, as he suffered from Insomnia and sometimes from Asthma, and therefore he would get up from bed very late. But latterly he was not suffering from Insomnia and hence he went to bed early and would get up early in the morning and go to the banks of the Ganges and stroll about there for an hour. On returning home he would read the daily newspapers and before 9 A.M. he would begin writing articles for the *Patrika*. He would write upto 10 or 11 A.M. and then bathe and take his meal. He was a great advocate of walking and bathing. Before the bath he would carefully rub mustard oil over his body and to every European with whom he became intimate he recommended this along with the wearing of *dhoti* and *chudder*.

After his morning meal though his home was his office he did not take any nap but would begin writing at once. In this way he would write upto 4 or 5 P.M. when he would go out either for a walk or for attending meetings. Throughout the day he was pestered with visitors and he was never "not at home." Though very busy he would give a patient hearing to everybody, rich and poor alike, who came to him for advice or assistance. He was never a rich man, but his wants were few. He had no luxury or hobby over which to spend money. He was a perfect teetotaler and took one or two betel-leaves only after taking his meals.

Moti Lal's favourite resort in the evening was the Ganges side, but latterly it became too much crowded with people. So he changed his venue and in the evening would go either to the Cornwallis, College or Dalhousie Square or the Maidan. He would count the number of times he walked round the square so that he might know how many miles he had walked. Latterly, when for ill-health he could not go out to any of the squares or parks he would walk for hours on the verandah of his house.

No one, they say, is a hero to his valet. So Moti Lal Ghose with whom I was associated from my birth in 1897 to his death in 1922, i.e., for a period of 25 years, cannot be

a hero to me. I had the opportunity of looking to his failings as very few others had and so there were times when I thought that he was an ordinary mediocre man. But in order to understand a man one must be either superior to him or at least equal to him in greatness and thus it was that I could not on many occasions understand him. I found him almost always deeply immersed in his work in connection with the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. So, I was not a little surprised when on a certain day while I was reading aloud Spencer's doctrine of *subspecie eternie* from my text book for the B.A. examination he heard me for some time and explained the thing in a way which few Professors of Philosophy could have done. He was raised in my estimation. Since then while preparing his biography I had to study many of his writings and now I have come to realise how vastly learned he was and what a great thinker he was and it would be no exaggeration to say that I have come to regard him as a hero.

I was his constant companion for many years: when boys of my age were playing football or tennis in the afternoons I was writing articles under his dictation or accompanying him to political meetings. Often I revolted, he saw through it and admonished me by saying, "If you are associating with me you are learning many things which will stand you in good stead in after life." A large number of his articles and correspondence were dictated to me. In fact a major portion of his speech at Krishnagar, of which I shall write afterwards, was written by me under his dictation. He dictated for a few hours daily for days together. On one occasion I revolted. I meekly submitted that I had some home-tasks given by our Professor of English and so had not much time at any disposal. "Have you no pity for this old man?" he flared up, "I don't require your help." I left my pencil and came away. But soon I was filled with remorse and went to assist him again.

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## CHAPTER XLI

### WHITE VERSUS BROWN

A Railway Incident—"A Native Calls Me A Native"—Black Swine and White Swine.

I read with considerable interest and indignation the account published a few years ago in the *Patrika* of the way in which two highly placed respectable Indian officials were sought to be insulted by a white planter and his Manager at the Patna Railway Station. Incidents like the above were things of common occurrence in India and if all of them were reported newspaper columns would have been daily filled up only with these. The incident reminded me of a similar one in the life of my late lamented grandfather Babu Moti Lal Ghose of revered memory which like many other incidents of his life, significant or insignificant, had not been published anywhere. I had it treasured up in my breast as I heard him often narrate the story to his intimate friends, though he did not publish it in any paper. I published this incident in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* sometime after his death.

The story is this. It occurred within the last decade of Moti Lal's life. He was returning to Calcutta from Deoghur where he had gone for a change of air. At the Jasidih station (then named as Baidyanath Junction) he got into a Second Class compartment. He found it occupied by a middle-aged white man whom he took to be an Englishman and an old lady, apparently a relation of his. No sooner had he entered the carriage than the Saheb exclaimed, "Who are you? Why do you come here?" With his characteristic good humour Moti Lal replied, "I am a gentleman; I have come to travel?" "Why have you come here? This is for Europeans only. You better go to the Inter Class,"—said the Saheb. Moti Lal answered, "Well, this compartment is not reserved for Europeans. Moreover when I have got a ticket for the Second Class why should I go to the Inter Class?"

"Well, you won't go, then I shall chuck you out," said the Saheb gruffly. "Very well, I take my seat here, try to chuck me out if you can"—with this Babu Moti Lal calmly took his seat on the bench. Now, imagine the situation. Moti Lal was a lean old man at that time. But his opponent was a man in the prime of his youth and white-skinned to boot. Considering the numberless precedents of poor Indians "possessing enlarged spleens which were always susceptible to rupture even from the least powerful stimulus" this throwing out of a challenge was a rather dangerous act for Babu Moti Lal. The Saheb however understood that at last he had caught a Tartar and did not make any more "golmal."

But as ill-luck would have it at this time out came from the water-closet a young lady, apparently the wife of the Saheb, and finding Moti Lal in the compartment she looked askance at him and frowned and said, "Well, what brings you here?" Moti Lal replied, "Madam, I have come to travel." She asked, "How far are you going?" "I am going to Calcutta," was the reply. "To Calcutta! my goodness!" exclaimed the lady, "such a long distance with a native! You better go to some other compartment." With a smile in his face Moti Lal said, "Madam, why do you hate me so much? If I am a native you are also a native." "What, what, a native! I am a native?" she shrieked out as if she had trodden upon a snake, "Well Jack, see, a native calls me a native." "Yes, Madam, what I have said is quite true. If I am a native of India you are also a native of England," said Moti Lal. "But, but," screamed out the lady moving her hand in the air, "but you are a black swine." "That does not make much difference; if I am a black swine you are a white swine!"—retorted Moti Lal characteristically.

The train was all this time stopping at the station and a large number of men had assembled on the platform in front of the compartment. The European trio now found that it was difficult to fight with this Bengalee gentleman and they called aloud for the Station Master. When he came the European said to him that this Indian had insulted a European

lady by calling her a "native." Moti Lal also complained against the European and his wife ; he said that the former had threatened him by saying that he would chuck him out and the latter had grossly insulted him by calling him a "black swine." The train was to have stopped there only for 10 minutes ; but the hue and cry made her wait for some time more.

By the bye, the Station Master, an Indian gentleman, knew Babu Moti Lal very well and was not only a constant reader of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* which was then edited by him, but was one amongst his numerous admirers. He at once requested Babu Moti Lal to come and occupy a First Class compartment ; and after hearing the whole story from those who had assembled there he wired the substance of it to the Station Master of Madhupur. Before leaving the compartment Moti Lal asked the European to give him his name and address, but the Saheb had locked up his mouth for ever and did not utter a single word even when asked by the Station Master in his official capacity to give his name and address.

Now when the train reached Madhupur, the station next to Jasidih, the platform was found packed with the Railway police and as soon as the train stopped the Station Master, a European, came to Moti Lal in his new compartment and inquired of him if he had any inconvenience there. "No, thank you," said Moti Lal, "that European lady's unwillingness to travel with a native has made me much comfortable here." But lo, what did the Station Master do? He at once went near the compartment in which the European gentleman and the two ladies were travelling and ushered a good many Indians into the compartment so that it was packed up and all were Indians there save and except the European trio. Many passengers had by this time understood what the matter was and many came to Moti Lal and requested him to go and see with his own eyes the plight of the trio, but Moti Lal politely declined to do so. He, however, requested some gentlemen to keep an eye on the European and try to get his

name and address. But the Saheb would never disclose his identity.

At Burdwan the Saheb and the Memsahabs got down and were about to go away. On seeing this Moti Lal came out of his compartment and asked some gentleman to get the Saheb's name and address ; but the Saheb was silent as ever. Moti Lal noticed that when going out of the platform the European showed a pass-ticket to the ticket-collector at the gate. At once he sent a man to the ticket-collector from whom it was ascertained that the name of the European was Mr. M—D—l and he was an employee of the East Indian Railway Company.

After coming to Calcutta Moti Lal wrote a letter in his characteristic humorous style describing this incident to the then Agent of the E. I. Railway, who after a sifting enquiry into the matter wrote in reply that the employee in question had been punished for his incivility.

How I wish I had kept a copy of Moti Lal's letter to the Agent, so that I might give the whole story to the readers in his inimitable style !

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## CHAPTER XLII

### KRISHNAGAR CONFERENCE—1915

Encomiums by Surendra Nath and S. N. Mukherjee—Some Points From Moti Lal's Presidential Address—A Programme of Work—Attitude of Indian Press—How Our Ancestors Lived—Some Crying Needs—Moti Lal's Scheme And Non-Co-Operation Movement Compared—Factory System Not Good For India—The Humble *Charka* Versus the Magnificent Mill.

In recognition of the services he had done to his country the people of Bengal elected Babu Moti Lal Ghose President of the Bengal Provincial Conference in April, 1915. Rai Prasanna Coomar Bose Bahadur, a leading member of the Krishnagar Bar and an old friend of Moti Lal, was the Chairman of the Reception Committee.

When the conference assembled Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea proposed Babu Moti Lal Ghose to the chair. In doing so he said :—

“You who are now to occupy the presidential chair are one of the last survivors of the great race who have made Bengal what she is today. Your name will go down along with those of Monmohon Ghose, Lal Mohon Ghose, W. C. Bannerjea and others to remote posterity, as one of the founders of modern Bengal (cheers). In inviting you to occupy the presidential chair, we honour ourselves. The history of this time will place you in the front rank of our public men.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, Babu Moti Lal Ghose is a veteran journalist, a greater veteran than myself. Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. He is in the forefront of our public life. His grasp of public questions is phenomenal. His treatment of them is marked by a fervour of patriotism and keenness of insight that extorts the admiration of friends and foes alike. I was having a talk with one of the highest officials—I am precluded from giving you the name but not the substance of the conversation—I was having a talk with one of the highest officials—and he told me—my friend will feel a flush and glow of pride—I read the *Patrika* very carefully ; I read it because the *Patrika*



Moti Lal Ghose  
1915

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sets forth the views from a standpoint very different from our own. We want to know exactly what the opposite side has got to say in matters of administration. No greater praise could be bestowed upon a journalist. . . . In the critical position in which we stand today we need the wisdom and statesmanlike guidance of men like Babu Moti Lal Ghose."

Babu Sachindra Nath Mukherjee, Vakil, Calcutta High Court in supporting the election of Babu Moti Lal Ghose delivered an eloquent speech, in course of which he said ;—

"Gentlemen, Babu Moti Lal Ghose would long ago, have been acclaimed, or for the matter of that he would long ago have become the President of the National Congress by the united suffrage of his countrymen, but what with his innate modesty, the sweetness and gentleness of his disposition that shrink instinctively from the dazzling glare of the footlights and his utter unobtrusiveness, it has been supremely difficult to draw him away from the cloistered seclusion of his editorial sanctum. The Council Chamber, the Municipal Board and other paraphernalia of our public life know him not, for he has never aspired to radiate in those spheres the sunshine of his sturdy and vigorous personality. He has too high a regard for, too lofty a conception of, his duty as a journalist, for in that capacity he is the every day counsellor of the Government, and what is more, the instructor of his people upon whose words hung thousands of his countrymen in respectful attention. He has identified himself whole-heartedly, with all the ardour of his being, the depth and intensity of his soul, with his paper, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, a name that is one to conjure with in the field of Indian journalism, which stands in the forefront in the rank of the accredited organs of Indian public opinion, that jealous and Argus-eyed guardian of popular privileges, that faithful exponent of popular views and aspirations, that stoutest champion of popular rights and liberties . . . . But Moti Lal Ghose is our political sage, whose inspiring words of advice and guidance keep the nation in the straight path of duty. He is again our scarred veteran, the hero of a hundred fights, whose brow is furrowed with lines of anxious care for his country, in whose head flow the silvery locks of mature judgment, the veteran fighter whose pen is, indeed, mightier than the sword and whose argument is more potent, more princible in its effect than the javelin or the spear."

In the course of his presidential address at the Bengal Provincial Conference held at Krishnagar in the year 1915 Motilal said that in order to improve our condition, we should give up internecine quarrels and party feeling which were the curse of our country. In free countries rivals fight political battles, but here we had no such necessity and our first duty was to put our own house in order. In stead of depending upon Government for the removal of our wants and grievances we should remove them ourselves. By so doing we would practically be free—if only we gave up litigation and foreign goods.

He then suggested a plan of work for putting our house in order, i.e., educating people to have recourse to such means as would make them free. This was nothing but political agitation throughout the length and breadth of the country. As to how the agitation should be carried on he said :—

“Let each District carry out the following programme of works :—

- (1) The spread of Swadeshi or National feeling ; the purchase of India-made things even at a sacrifice ; the encouragement and development of indigenous home industries and agricultural reforms.
- (2) Education of the masses by pamphlets, speeches and conferences.
- (3) The arrest and termination, as far as possible of internecine quarrels by arbitration courts as well as by the efforts of missionaries, honorary or paid, appointed for the purpose of preaching nationalism.
- (4) Education, both general and technical on national lines, as far as that is possible.
- (5) Sanitation.
- (6) Instructions for economical living.
- (7) Possible social reforms.
- (8) Promotion of good feelings between Hindus and Mussalmans.”

Our attitude to the Government should be, he said, like that “inaugurated by such stalwarts as Messrs. Hume, Dadabhai Naoroji, W. C. Bonnerjee, etc., namely, constitutional opposition, as a rule, and co-operation only when to the best interests of the country.”

As to the attitude of the Indian Press and other Indian public bodies towards the Government he quoted the following from the writing (in 1884) of a civilian, Sir C. C. Stevens (afterwards Lieutenant Governor of Bengal) :—

“The position of the Native Press must necessarily be peculiar. It must, from the nature of things, be always in opposition. If we found a Native paper constantly expatiating on the blessings of English rule, on the unmixed advantages of western civilization, and on the administrative and private virtues of English officials, we think we should not respect the editor or his staff the more for it. We should think him a hypocrite who was playing what he considered to be a paying game, and we should look to see what reward he might obtain. Such a newspaper would neither interest, nor be respected by, Native or European readers. We must, therefore, look to Native writers for criticism of Government measures and of Government servants ; and it must not be a matter of surprise if we find them advocating Native interests and seeking fields for Native ambition. This being so, I think, that all we have to expect of the Native Press is that it shall discharge the duties of an opposition honestly and with moderation ; that it shall refrain from malicious attacks ; that it shall not strain facts or arguments in support of foregone conclusions ; that it shall not throw itself open to be used for purposes of private revenge, and that care shall be taken to ascertain and to report the truth.”

He then appealed to the audience to return to the life of our ancestors, give up luxuries and be economical. He said :—

“Litigation was unknown among our ancestors ; why should we not then be able to at least minimise, if not altogether remove, its disastrous effects ? If we are satisfied with the humble tenour of our life, we can do away with the necessity of depending upon foreign articles. Our people once controlled the yarn industry of the country by the universal use of the *charka* in every house, rich or poor. Not many generations ago, we made our own metallic utensils and vessels ; we made our own bangles ; we made our own *goor* and salt : why should we not be able to do all these and many other things again ?”

As to economical living he said :—

“For the regeneration of the country we must live a simple life and rely mainly on our own resources and

exertions, which means that we must nationalise our mode of life as thoroughly as possible. Why do we use costly coats, boots and sometimes hats, when our forefathers, though shoeless, coatless and hatless, were far more healthy and robust than we are? Luxury does not suit a poor and starving people. Similarly, we must nationalise all other important concerns of our domestic life,—educational, industrial, sanitary and social."

He then drew a picture of how prosperous Bengal was 60 or 70 years ago (*i.e.*, about 1845-55) and gave a dismal picture of our present and future.

He gave a description of the havoc which the scourge of Malaria was doing in Bengal. "The very existence of the nation rests on the solution of the malaria problem. The improvement of village sanitation, therefore, demands the first consideration of the people and the authorities." Poverty of the people and defective drainage, he said, were the main causes of Malaria.

Rural Drainage, Water Supply and other sanitary improvements formed the next subject matter of his speech. "Sanitation first, education afterwards"—he said :—

"No one is a more earnest advocate of mass education than my humble self ; yet I am compelled to say—sanitation first and education afterwards under existing circumstances, though I am aware that education indirectly helps sanitation. For, who would enjoy the blessings of education if the people were dead or in a dying state? Education can wait, but not sanitation. Of course, it goes without saying that if we could have, both together by our communal efforts and State aid, nothing could be better or more welcome."

Indeed, unless one gets a good health what will one's education do to one? He thus urged for open-air schools and sanatoria for students.

Some districts of Bengal were at this time going to be partitioned by the authorities ; he strongly protested against this. We were 'over-governed', he said, and the price we had to pay for the administration was almost crushing. If the districts were again divided we should have to undergo additional costs.

He then went on to show how the money derived from the Road Cess and the Public Works Cess was being misspent and he suggested that they should be spent only for the purpose for which they were realised.

He continued that the villagers should be given the right to use fire-arms to protect themselves from armed dacoits and wild animals.

He then pointed out that it was high time that the Indians were given self-government.

Moti Lal concluded his address with a spirited appeal to the younger generation of his countrymen to shake off their lethargy and be up and doing for the cause of the country.

In an appendix to the speech he gave a history of the Road Cess in Bengal and showed that the Cess fund absolutely belonged to the people, and that the diversion of the fund was not legitimate. He also showed that the cesses were a violation of the pledges given by the Permanent Settlement of 1793.

Anyone who peruses Moti Lal's Krishnagar speech will at once see that Moti Lal was a master of style and he knew how to appeal to his audience. Though a difficult one his subject matter was made easy by virtue of the plain language in which he wrote. His sentences were crisp—short, well-balanced and devoid of involved constructions. Simplicity was his rhetoric.

From this speech also it is apparent what a practical-minded man he was. He was not an idealist giving schemes which though theoretically sound very well are impracticable. On the contrary his scheme was definite and practicable. He had a thorough grasp of his subject and thus had not to ramble about. The main point of his speech was that it was useless to cry for help from Government. To do so would be to cry in the wilderness. So instead of doing that the people should go on doing their own works. They should try to improve their conditions. They should not go to the law courts of the Government, but should settle their affairs out of court either themselves or through arbitration courts or *punchayets*.



They should not drink intoxicants, and should improve their industries and agriculture.

If we analyse the Non-co-operation Movement which Mahatma Gandhi inaugurated later on we find that the main points of this movement were :—

1. Boycott of Councils.
2. Boycott of Law Courts and promotion of Arbitration Courts.
3. Boycott of Government Schools and colleges and opening of national schools.
4. Boycott of foreign goods, and especially cloth, and encouragement of indigenous home-spun (Khaddar) and other Swadeshi articles.
5. Giving up of Honours and Titles, conferred by the Government.
6. Withdrawal from Police, Military and other Government services.
7. Suspension of Taxes.

If these, said Mahatma Gandhi, were strictly adhered to Swaraj would be near our hands.

Now, what did Motilal say? If we compare the views of the two point by point we find a strange similarity between them.

1. As to Boycott of Councils, when Moti Lal delivered his speech at Krishnagar no such question could arise. It was before the inauguration of the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms and strictly speaking there were no Councils at that time where people's representatives could sit.

Later, however, when Mr. T. Prakasam of Madras and Mr. V. J. Patel (afterwards President of the Indian Legislative Assembly) came to see him in his sick bed and sought his opinion on the point he warned them against the "insidious poison" of the Council Chamber, which according to him was a delusion and a snare. Like Mahatma Gandhi he always kept himself away from the Council Chamber.

2. Boycott of Law Courts—time and again Moti Lal had advocated it. Not in his speeches only but in his paper the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* as also in private conversations he had

all along been asking his countrymen not to go to the Law Courts. I quote the following from his Krishnagar speech :—

“As a matter of fact, we can secure almost our full personal liberty only by giving up litigation and foreign goods. When we are at home, we are as free as Englishmen themselves. But the moment we enter the precincts of a court house, we feel that we are in a different environment and we are breathing a different atmosphere. It is then that we are reminded of our utter helplessness and also of the lordly majesty of the Judge, the Magistrate, the Police officers, nay, even of the constable and the peon, armed as they all are with more or less of punitive power. Indeed, the paraphernalia of the courts and offices are bound to produce a most chilling and emasculating effect even upon the stoutest heart. Why should we seek these demoralizing influences when we can avoid many of them by care and prudence? Similarly, on no occasion should we feel our worthlessness more acutely than when we have to use an article of foreign manufacture. What could be more humiliating than that we should have to go naked and eat our food without salt if Manchester were to cease sending us her cloths and Liverpool her salt?”

Instead of the present Law Courts he suggested the re-establishment of our old *punchayet* system.

3 & 4. As regards the next two items of the Non-co-operation Movement, viz., giving up Government schools and opening national schools, and boycotting foreign goods and clothes and encouraging indigenous produce and clothes, Moti Lal had been advocating these for a long time.

He was also very much against the system of education which was followed by Government. He advocated the formation of a non-official Committee to enquire into the conditions prevailing among the students. He said :—

“The first duty of such a Committee, then, should be to devise a system of examination that will, while efficiently testing the knowledge of the examinees, operate with the minimum of hardship on their delicate and debilitated physique. The dreadful system which makes one single final examination the sole arbiter of their academic destinies should, by all means, be abolished. This is the bugbear that robs their tender constitutions of half their sleep and appetite and almost all the recrea-

tion necessary to keep the average human being in health. Even if all the toil and trouble of the anxious and over-worked examinee be crowned with success, it means a success purchased with more than its proportionate price of life-blood. If it ends in failure, it means an addition of disappointment and discontentment to physical exhaustion. Such a system, then, deserves to be replaced by one which is less dangerous and more rational and it will not be difficult to devise a suitable scheme, if the proposed Committee give their whole heart to the work.

"As practical remedies against this dismal state of things I may suggest the starting of open-air schools as well as special sanatoria for students."

Moti Lal had long been advocating the handloom and the Charka. He wrote several articles showing the usefulness of these and also pointing out how the Americans at one time made homespun fashionable. Of course Moti Lal did not use the word "Khaddar", which is not Bengali, but he used the expressions home-made, home-spun, etc., to express the same idea.

As to the revival of our indigenous industries he would often write and speak with feeling about how our cloth industry had been ruined, how heavy duties were imposed on our fine Dacca Muslins which were imported into Manchester, how the dealers had to pay heavy export duties when they were sending these cloths outside India, how even when these failed to ruin our cloth industry the thumbs of our expert weavers were cut off. He often wished that our weaving industry were revived and encouraged.

Seven years earlier at a meeting at Parshibagan on the 7th August, 1908, to oppose the Partition of Bengal, Moti Lal had asked his audience to boycott foreign cloth, not to drink intoxicants and to avoid the law courts. "Follow the example," he said, "of the indigo ryots of Bengal and secure your salvation *without hurting a fly*." Those who have read the history of Bengal may remember how the indigo planters gave *dādan* (advance money) to the poor cultivators and oppressed them mercilessly to realise their dues. When matters became absolutely unbearable these cultivators in a body refused to

cultivate indigo plant. "This hand," they said, "will never touch indigo again." Thus they proved successful. It was something like Passive Resistance. Moti Lal advised his audience to promise, that "This hand will never touch any foreign goods, so far that is possible."

5. As to titles and honours Moti Lal had all along been saying that these had a very demoralising effect on the recipients. By giving titles and honours Government had bought up many of our promising leaders who from being unbending critics of the Government had been converted into ardent lovers of it since they had been dubbed with honours. Many of our rich men had pledged to the Government their lives without caring whether the Government was right or wrong simply in exchange of some paltry titles.

5 & 7. As to the last two points, viz., withdrawal of police and military and other Government services, and suspension of taxes, I am not sure, if Moti Lal had said anything about these before the inauguration of the Non-co-operation Movement. Perhaps, in his time the country was not prepared for these. But there is no doubt whatsoever that he was preparing the ground for these by exposing how degenerated some people became on entering the Police service in India. He also exposed the cruel nature of some of the taxes and the mis-use of others.

Thus from a perusal of Moti Lal's Krishnagar speech we find that he was teaching the country to be self-dependent and not to be dependent on England for the supply of its needs, or in other words it was economic independence that the country should strive for in the first instance. That independence does not require war or blood-shed and can come without disturbing the peace of the country. He also spoke for cultural independence which means a return to the Indian life of yore. If India be economically and culturally free, political freedom is bound to follow.

Like Mahatma Gandhi Moti Lal was also very much against the introduction of the western conditions of life into India. He did not like the factory system of Europe to be introduced into this country. The greater portion of the Indian people were

agriculturists and they worked mostly in the open fields. Their necessities were few and there was no luxury amongst them ; so they had not to produce articles of luxury ; their chief labours consisted in producing food and cloth. The women span yarn at home and the men tilled the fields. When they had no work in the fields those who were skilled artizans betook themselves to their tasks, the potter took to his wheels, the blacksmith came to his furnace, the weaver went to his loom, and the shoemaker took his lash, and so forth and so on. Each worked independently and was his own master. This was the state of affairs in olden times.

But look to the other picture. With the introduction of the western factories there has grown up a class of Capitalists, and the poor people no longer follow their independent profession. They are now slaves, eternal slaves of their masters, the Capitalists. If they are thrown out of employment they know not how to earn their livelihood—the potter has forgotten to turn his wheel, the weaver has forgotten to work his loom. They have learnt to work with a big machine which it is impossible for them to possess. They have lost their old handicraft and have thus sold themselves to the Capitalist. The *Charka* has been replaced by the Mill and the free man plying the *Charka* has become a day-labourer in the Mills.

Gentle reader, look to this picture. The man is working in the field, his sons are helping him, at noon-day his wife comes from home with their food. They stop their work, sit under a tree and enjoy their frugal repast. After taking rest for some time they work till evening and return home content with their day's work and in a prayerful mood.

And look to the other picture. Tens of thousands of workers, men, women and children are working together in a big building where the lynx eyes of their superintendents are constantly watching over them to see if they are doing any work or not, where no work and no pay is the rule, where they do not care whether you are ill or disabled, where they are concerned with your work only, where the rooms are ill-ventilated and damp, where they have to work before poisonous

gases and with poisonous materials and sleep huddled together like swine, forgetful of the beauties of Nature or thoughts of God.

Gentle reader, which is better ?

Science has led to the discovery of machinery which are avowedly destructive, such as the maxim guns, the poisonous gases, etc : Science has also led to the discovery of machinery which at first sight seem to be beneficial to mankind. But are they really so ? They are beneficial no doubt, but only to the few and not to the many. In this connection Moti Lal's observations on the *Charka* may be interesting :—

“No country has suffered so terribly perhaps as a result of improvements in science and arts during the last century as India. Let us cite a few instances. It was the *charka* or the spinning-wheel which at one time made this country one of the richest in the world. It was with this humble contrivance that thread was spun in every Indian household and cloths of the finest quality woven out of it by the host of weavers. Even the ladies of royal houses were bound to have their *Charka* and produce a certain quantity of thread. In this way spinning was nationalised as it were in this country, and the out-turn of thread was so immense as to enable the weavers to meet not only the need of the whole nation, so far as cotton fabric was concerned, but that of many foreign countries also.

“The *Charka* is a marvellous machine. It consists of a few pieces of ordinary wood so cleverly adjusted as to produce the finest of thread from the coarsest of cotton. A vast amount of money is being spent annually both in British India and the Indian States but in vain, to grow long stapled cotton. But the *Charka* needs no such superior cotton to spin out the best kind of thread. Still it gave employment to millions of poor widows, even in the early days of British rule. The weavers enriched themselves and their country immensely by producing the finest cloths out of them and selling them to foreigners. But the spinning machine which is a product of modern science and art, has stilled the hum of the *Charka*, and brought starvation to millions of Indian homes ! The invention has no doubt increased the wealth of some Western countries, but it has practically ruined the masses in India.”

## CHAPTER XI,III

### LIFE OUTSIDE CALCUTTA

Periodical Changes of Air—Some Incidents—At Deoghur, Balasore, Puri and Waltair.

During the latter part of his life Moti Lal used to go outside Calcutta for a change of air almost every year. In course of his work as a public man and in connection with his paper he had travelled throughout India. Chief amongst the places where he went for change were Deoghur, Simultala, Madhupur, Balasore, Puri, Waltair, Darjeeling, Moosoorie, Koilwar and Benares. He also made several tours in East Bengal. Though he went for a change to these places his activities did not cease. Almost daily he would send leaders to the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* from these places and a large number of newspapers followed him in his sojourn which he daily read, re-read and digested. Wherever he went he soon acquired a host of friends—big folk of the locality would come to him of their own accord. His manners were simple—too simple, some times even provoking. He would make friendship with little boys by pulling them by the neck from behind by the handle of his umbrella. His love of music found some satisfaction when he was outside Calcutta, because, though working there, he had there more leisure than in Calcutta and the evenings he would spend in singing *Kirtan* and *Dhrupad* songs along with his daughter, grandsons and other members of his family. He went to Puri in the year 1911. He was then about 65 years old. Still he would daily bathe and swim in the sea. Here, however, he contracted a stomach complaint which later gave him much trouble.

During the Partition days he was for sometime on a change at Deoghur. At his instance many Swadeshi meetings and processions were organised there. In this connection I am reminded of an incident. A social gathering was convened at

the Deoghur School premises on the occasion of the *Vijaya*. Babu Hari Nath Ray, Judge of Calcutta Small Causes Court, presided. Moti Lal was invited there to speak something. Now, a pleader of a District Court opened the proceedings and in doing so he began to deliver a speech in English. Up stood Moti Lal and protested against the speech being in English. He said that in social functions our speeches should be in Bengali. Moti Lal in his simplicity did not understand that the pleader had committed to memory a fine speech in English, and so unconsciously put him to an unenviable position and caused roars of laughter. With the permission, however, of Moti Lal and the president the pleader spoke in English. But all the other speakers including the president and Mr. S. K. Sen, Barrister-at-Law, then newly returned from England also spoke in Bengali. Moti Lal in his turn of course spoke in Bengali. He began by saying, "The speaker who opened to-day's proceedings seems to be a master in spoken English. I too have something to do with English. The only difference is that while that gentleman finds pleasure in speaking English I do so in writing."

The love which Moti Lal bore for the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was perhaps the greatest of all. He valued it more than his life. A story may be told in this connection. It was when he was at Balasore for a change. The members of his family had gone there in advance and he with his personal servant an Oriya named Purushottam, briefly called Puria, who accompanied him in many of his tours, was following them. But due to heavy rains there was a flood in the river Rupnarayan and there was every chance of the bridge giving way under the weight of the Railway train. So the trains were stopped on one side of the river and the passengers had to go to the other side over the bridge and get into the train which waited there. When the train in which Moti Lal was travelling stopped before the Kolaghat bridge it was night and only a few coolies could be had to carry the luggages. Moti Lal could secure no coolies—perhaps, they had all been taken away by more fortunate passengers. So he left his servant



in charge of his luggage, trunks and beddings, and took the bound volumes of the old files of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of which there were a good many with him, over his head and crossed the river. Next morning we found him at Balasore coming with his files of *Amrita Bazar Patrika* only. The servant and the luggages came much later, probably by the next train.

On other occasions also whenever Moti Lal went out from Calcutta for a change he would carefully take a number of files of the *Patrika* with him. His dress and other things were taken care of by his family-members. All his attention was rivetted on these files.

The Raja (Sree Raja Chintalapaty Suryanarayan Raja Bahadur Garu) of Tuni (Godavery District, Madras) came on a pleasure trip to Calcutta in September, 1915 accompanied by his priest Yogi Srinivasa Swami and Private Secretary K. V. Suryanarayan Charya Sarma. He was introduced to Babu Moti Lal Ghose through a common Madraste friend. Very soon the Raja became very intimate with Moti Lal, who also helped him in becoming known to many leading members of Calcutta society. When returning to Tuni the Raja Bahadur invited Moti Lal to come to Waltair where he had engaged a house which was now unoccupied. At his invitation Moti Lal with his family started for Waltair on May 7, 1916 and stayed there for about a couple of months with a view to recoup his health by enjoying the sea-bath and breathing the bracing sea-breeze. He was now an old man of about 70 years. His physique was never strong. Yet at this old age he used to take long walks by the beach and bathe in the sea regularly, the writer then a young man of 18 summers being his constant companion during these walks and baths. Five years before this (*i.e.*, in 1911) Moti Lal had gone to Puri with his family. There also he used to bathe in the sea regularly. My humble self was then also with him and an incident is still fresh in my memory. We had gone to Puri in early *Baisakh* (middle of April) when the sea was very calm and a sea-bath was an easy affair. I was surprised to find that Moti Lal

could swim in the sea even at that age and sometimes he did it even better than myself. But when the days went on and the rainy season came the number of sea-bathers was gradually reduced. On one occasion it rained continually for two days and we had to bathe at home. On the third day when the rains had stopped Moti Lal wanted to bathe in the sea. The water was no longer blue but had become grey or sand-coloured and the breakers also were very high and making a tremendous noise. I wanted him to desist from bathing, but he silenced me by calling me a coward. I had no alternative but to follow him. A *Nulia* (local fisherman) caught hold of one of his hands and I caught hold of the other. It was drizzling and there were very few bathers on the beach. The breakers were 10 or 11 feet high. As soon as we entered into the water a breaker came with tremendous force. Both the *Nulia* and myself had to let go our hands when the breaker lifted us up into the sky and smashed all of us on to the ground. I was under water for a few seconds and felt as if I was being trampled upon by an elephant. We managed to get up on the shore with some difficulty. Moti Lal remonstrated with us. He complained that we ought to have let go his hands earlier. He believed that had we done so he would not have been smashed to the ground like us. We, however, were not of the same opinion. Sea-bathing at Waltair was much easier than at Puri. Though there were some rocky places yet there were places between the rocks where the sea was shallow and the breakers also were low.

From Waltair Moti Lal used to write daily for the *Patrika*. The evenings were generally spent in music, in singing *Kirtans* and Hindi songs of Mian Tan Sen, the court musician of Akbar the Great.

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## CHAPTER XLIV

### PRESIDENCY COLLEGE EMBROGLIO

Distribution of Prizes to Hindu and Hare School Students—Professor Oaten and Presidency College Students—Leaders in the *Partika*—Professor Oaten Assaulted—Srijut Subhas Bose and other Students Expelled—Sj. Subhas Bose Meets Moti Lal.

A distribution of prizes to the meritorious students of the Hindu and Hare Schools was celebrated with great pomp and grandeur in the maidan between the Presidency College and Hare School buildings on Monday, the 10th January, 1916. His Excellency the Governor of Bengal (Lord Carmichael) presided over the function. A *shamiana* was specially erected on the maidan and invited gentlemen assembled under it. Mr. H. R. James, Principal of the Presidency College, Rai Rasamay Mitra Bahadur (Head Master of the Hindu School), Rai Saheb Ishan Chandra Ghose (Head Master of the Hare School) and a large number of Professors and students attended the function.

Several students of the Third Year Class of the Presidency College, who were ex-students of the Hindu and Hare Schools being invited went out to see the prize distribution ceremony in the College compound. They were, therefore, a little late in attending their class, which was to be taken by Professor Rabindra Narayan Ghose. As they were passing along the corridor of a room in which Professor E. F. Oaten was lecturing, he came out, obstructed them, caught one of them by the hand and ordered them to go away. What exactly happened it is difficult to say, as different versions appeared in the Press. According to the students' version they most becomingly went down with the intention of appealing to the Principal. In the meantime other students who were waiting in their class room for Professor Ghose also began coming down through the corridor as Professor Ghose did not turn up. They were met by Prof. Oaten on the corridor and he threatened to

fine them five rupees each if they left their class room before the hour struck for doing so and sent them back to their class room. Then came Professor Ghose to his class and formally dismissed it and with his permission the students began to pass through the corridor again. This time also they were prevented by Mr. Oaten who, it was alleged, also gave some pushes to some of them. The students applied to Principal James narrating their grievance but he advised them to patch up the matter with Mr. Oaten personally. The students were dissatisfied and went on a strike. After two days Mr. Oaten made an apology to the students and the classes were resumed. A written statement was prepared through the intervention of some other Professors of the College in which the students admitted that "some of them were technically wrong in remaining in the corridor" and Mr. Oaten on his part admitted that he "used some degree of force in insisting on the students to go to their class room" and expressed "his sincere regret for having done so."

The next day, however, Mr. Oaten behaved in a quite different way. After entering the Third and Fourth Year (combined) History Honours Class he wanted those who were absent on the previous day to go away from the class. They left the class and represented the matter to Principal James, who, to their great surprise, declared himself quite helpless in the matter.

To add a pinch of salt to the cut wound, as the Bengali adage goes, the Principal fined the whole body of the students of the College Rupees Five each for not attending their classes for two days.

On the 15th of January a long leading editorial appeared on the subject in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in course of which it was said :—

"And lastly the Presidency College will not elevate itself, but lower itself in the estimation of the public, if taking advantage of this deplorable incident, in which a Professor is more to blame than the students, a sum of Rs. 5,000 is raised from them by one stroke of the pen. We trust Mr. James will reconsider the matter

and refuse to be a party to an act which may cast a slur on the glorious traditions of an institution whose honour is now in his keeping. As far as we are aware, never was the whole college fined on any previous occasion. A sum of rupees five thousand is no doubt very tempting, but Mr. James is no doubt above such petty temptation."

The article created a sensation in the student circle. They had been insulted by their Professor, they had gone to the Principal for redress, who far from making amends added injury to insult by trying to touch their pockets. The students were naturally hungering for sympathy and the spirit of sympathy which the above article in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* evinced captured the imagination of the student community. When hawkers at the junction of College Street and Harrison Road were selling the issue of the *Patrika* containing the above article there was a great rush and after a few copies had been sold and read by the students the demand for the paper became so very great that a copy of the paper which is usually sold for one anna sold at four annas each and when the copies were almost exhausted the hawkers even demanded eight annas for a copy.

Next day also the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* came out with a leading editorial giving a reply to a letter which Principal James had written on the subject. The correspondence columns of the paper also contained several letters giving the views of students and guardians as also of supporters of Mr. Oaten ; and for some time these were published from day to day.

On the 20th January a paragraph appeared in the *Patrika* recalling two other occasions when there were troubles between students and Professors. One occurred when Professor J. W. Holme of the Presidency College pulled a student by the ear because of his inattention to his lectures. The whole class struck. Mr. Peake, then officiating Principal, compelled Mr. Holme to apologise and the matter was made up in course of a few hours. The other incident related to Professor Harrison of the same College who told the students, "you are chattering like monkees." At the intervention of Mr. James,

who was then the Principal of the College, Mr. Harrison, who at first said that he would rather resign than apologise, did at last apologise to the students and the difference was made up. The *Patrika* re-called these incidents and commented :—"It is a remarkable fact that there had never been any serious quarrel between the Indian Professors and the students in the Presidency College."

Though the classes were resumed in the Presidency College and it appeared that normal order had been restored, feeling ran very high among the students. They were smarting under a sense of wrong. They thought that the imposition of the five rupees fine on each and every student of the College was a great injustice to them and they took it as something like "a massacre of the innocents" as a justification of the conduct of Professor Oaten and a censure on the student community. But Bengali students are submissive by nature, it is hard to exhaust their patience. Like the dust of the road they would ever remain under the feet of their masters.

But the dust being kicked may rise to the sky and strike one's forehead. It exactly happened thus in the case of the students of the Presidency College. At 3 P.M. on Tuesday the 15th February Professor Oaten was severely assaulted by a number of students in a corridor of the College.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* thus narrated the incident, so far as it was able to gather the facts in this connection, on the day following the assault :—

"It seems that after the dismissal of their class the First Year Chemistry Students were passing along the corridor by the only path which the students could avail of and in doing so, they had to proceed by a room in which Professor Oaten was lecturing. Mr. Oaten felt annoyed, came out of his room and is said to have caught hold of one of the students by the neck and called him a rascal. He then took him to the office room and fined him Re. 1.

"The student in question who is said to be barely 16, thereupon lodged a complaint before the Principal and awaited decision. The Principal, however, instead of taking immediate action postponed the matter till

3 P.M. Meanwhile the news spread all over the College and the students in general felt aggrieved specially as Mr. Oaten had behaved himself similarly on two former occasions.

"Now sometime after the above incident when Mr. Oaten was coming downstairs and passing through a number of students who had collected in the corridor in front of the common room, he received a blow from behind, and as he turned to see his assailant another student who was standing close by sprang upon him and threw him on the ground. Thereupon several other students fell upon the helpless professor and committed a savage assault upon him.

"After the incident the Principal made an enquiry into the matter, but the culprits, so far remain yet undetected."

Two or three days after this the Government issued a long communique giving the version of Professor Oaten. It stated that when Mr. Oaten was lecturing in his class some students were going by the corridor and talking among themselves in contravention of the college rule. Said the communique :—

"Mr. Oaten . . . went out of his room . . . went up to the student who had spoken and took him gently by the arm and led him to the Steward's room which was close by, and had his name recorded for a fine of Re. 1. Mr. Oaten considered it necessary to put his hand on the student to pick him out from the crowd of other students around him, but the youth did not resist and he employed no force in leading him to the Steward's room. Mr. Oaten states that he did not call the boy a 'rascal' as alleged by him."

As to the assault on the professor the communique went on :—

"On reaching the bottom of the staircase he (Mr. Oaten) passed through the group (of students) and had taken only a few steps from the foot of the stairs when he was attacked from behind and knocked down on to his hands and knees. He was then struck and kicked by some 15 assailants while he was prevented by blows and pressure from regaining his feet. He was kicked about his head and all over the body. Then the assault suddenly stopped, his assailants ran away, and he found that Mr. Gilchrist, a fellow Professor, was

standing by his side. He believes that the whole assault must have occupied about 40 seconds."

By the bye, this was described in the *Times* of London as "a murderous assault" which was "symptomatic of a widespread evil."!

As a sequel to the assault on Professor Oaten, under the orders of the Government of Bengal the Presidency College was closed from Friday, the 18th February pending enquiry into the assault, and a Committee was appointed by the Government to enquire into the general condition of discipline in the Presidency College.

On the 21st of February Babu Ananga Mohan Dam, B.A., a brilliant student of the sixth year M. A. class in Philosophy of the Presidency College was expelled "for taking a leading part in the assault on Mr. Oaten."

The following copy of a letter written to the Superintendent of the Eden Hindu Hostel by Mr. H. R. James was displayed on the Notice Board of the Hostel:—

"Babu Ananga Mohan Dam who has been expelled from the College by the Governing Body is expressly forbidden to re-enter the gates of the Eden Hindu Hostel. Boarders are forbidden to hold any communication or to speak with him except what is necessary (with the permission of the Superintendent) for forwarding his books, clothes and other property; for the removal of these properties every reasonable help is to be given to him. If money is required Principal will supply it. He is advised to start for home (Sylhet) this evening.

(Sd.) H. R. JAMES."

In course of two or three days the Eden Hindu Hostel was also closed to all but 2nd and 4th year students. The residents were directed to return home. Srijut Subhas Chandra Bose, then a student of the Third Year Class of the Presidency College, the idol of the students who knew him personally, was also expelled. In his case also the Governing Body of the College "resolved that Subhas Chandra Bose be expelled from the College for taking a leading part in the assault on Professor Oaten."



Later on another student named Satish Chandra De was also rusticated for a year for giving his name as "X. Y. Z." when asked by Professor Gilchrist to give his name.

The Committee appointed by the Government of Bengal to enquire into the Presidency College affair commenced its sitting on Monday, February 21st, 1916 in Justice Sir Asutosh Mukherjee's Chambers in the Calcutta High Court. But the work of the Committee did not progress much. After three or four days a Communique was issued on the subject by the Government. It stated that as soon as Mr. James, Principal of the Presidency College, received information of the appointment of a Committee to inquire into the affairs of the Presidency College, with a request that he would serve on the Committee, he paid a visit to the Hon'ble Mr. Lyon, Member of the Governor's Executive Council in charge of Education, and subjected him to gross personal insult. Mr. James had also sent to the Secretary of the Committee, with the request that it should be placed before the Committee, a copy of a letter which he had written to the Government accusing Sir Asutosh Mukherjee and Mr. Hornell, two members of the Enquiry Committee of bias against himself. From all these facts the Governor in Council considered that Mr. James had shown himself to be unfit to retain the post of Principal of the Presidency College. Accordingly Mr. James was transferred from that post and placed under suspension pending further orders, and Mr. W. C. Wordsworth, Inspector of Schools, Presidency Division (since, of the *Statesman*) was appointed Principal of the Presidency College in his place.

It may be re-called in passing that previous to these incidents there had been a tussle between Mr. James and Mr. Hornell for the post of Director of Public Instruction. The *Statesman* wrote 571 columns of print (1) in favour of Mr. James, and (2) in derogation of Mr. Hornell; and all these writings were believed in well-informed circles to have been the handiwork of Mr. James. Yet, Mr. James was a very successful Principal. Students had held him in great esteem and felt for him on account of his degradation.

In due course the report of the Committee of Enquiry was published. As could be expected it exonerated Messrs. James and Oaten and laid the blame at the door of the students who were considered to have become very touchy. The funniest thing, however, was that the Press was dragged in and severely castigated. It was contended that the writings in the Press had been rather indiscreet and but for them there would not have most probably been any strike. No doubt by the Press here the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was meant, for it had been most sympathetic to the students. A series of articles, humorous and argumentative, appeared in the leading columns of the *Patrika* criticising the observations of the Enquiry Committee which wanted to make the Press a scapegoat. The honour of the Press was vindicated and it was shown that the students did not deserve the hostile official and Anglo-Indian criticism which was frequently levelled against them.

The incidents in connection with the Presidency College imbroglio have been narrated here at some length for more reasons than one. First of all, it created a sensation among the student circle which was perhaps unprecedented. The matter became the talk of the day in almost every circle. Students of other colleges in Calcutta and mofussil closely followed the developments of the Presidency College affairs. They were united with a view to vindicate the honour of the student community and were ready to help each other. It may be said that the seeds of the youth movement were now imperceptibly sown. Another reason why I have included this affair in these pages is that I happened to be a student of the Presidency College at that time reading in the Second Year Class ; and as no man can tread beyond his shadow I must also do the same.

But the last, and perhaps the most important reason, why I have included this matter in these pages is the fact that it was the Presidency College affairs which brought two great luminaries of the political firmament of Bengal together and into very close contact with each other, I mean, Moti Lal

Ghose, the hero of a hundred battles in the past and Subhas Chandra Bose who had not yet taken his command but was destined to be a glorious fighter in the future. Moti Lal who had all along been a champion of the weak and the oppressed had almost always taken the side of the boys in a contest between the teachers and the students. He condemned the present system of education, he pitied the young hopefuls of the nation who, he said, were breaking down under the weight of books. The hours of study, according to him, were most inconvenient ; and he cursed the examinations, as being soul-killing, as so many nightmares constantly sitting on the chests of the student community. Even when he was passed sixty he used to say that "I still dream of examinations and they sit like a nightmare on my chest." In fact, he had an unbounded sympathy for the student community.

So when Srijuts Subhas Chandra Bose, Ananga Mohan Dan and Bepin Bihari De came to see Babu Moti Lal in connection with the Presidency College affairs, they had no difficulty. They were received by Motilal with open arms, and in fact much of what was written in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in connection with the Presidency College was done in consultation with them. There were some original contributions by them also.

I remember an incident in this connection. Moti Lal asked Bepin Babu and Subhas Babu to give him in writing something which they had just described to him. Subhas Babu (who was a student of the Third Year Class) looked at Bepin Babu (who was a student of the Sixth Year Class) and asked him to write it down. He seemed to say with his eyes, "Well, you are my senior, so you should write it." Bepin Babu said, "No, no, you must write ; when you are here I am not writing it." At last Subhas Babu agreed and with a pencil in hand he wrote out a number of pages with such great speed that we looked on agape. Since then Subhas Babu, Bepin Babu and Ananga Babu used to come to Babu Moti Lal off and on.

One day Moti Lal in course of conversation asked Subhas Babu,

“Well, Subhas, can you sing?”

“So, so,” replied Subhas Babu.

“Very well, then sing a song.”

Without much ado Subhas Babu at once began singing in a bass voice without even the aid of a harmonium,

“*Chintaya mama manasa Hari Chidghana Niranjana, etc.*”

চিন্তয় মম মানস হরি চিদঘন নিরঞ্জন

After finishing the song, Subhas Babu said, “This song was sung by the late Vivekananda Swami before Sri Sri Ramkrishna Paramhansa Dev.”

Moti Lal said, “You can sing very well. Do keep up the practice.”

## CHAPTER XLV

### HOME RULE MOVEMENT

Mrs. Besant—Home Rule League—Moti Lal joins the League—Lucknow Congress—Mrs. Besant Interned—Its After-effect—Moti Lal and Internees—Carmichael's Departure—Advice to Ronaldshay.

A unique personality that came into prominence in the political firmament of India in 1916 was Mrs. Annie Besant. Hitherto she had been known as a theologist and social reformer. “Irish by birth, English by marriage and Indian by adoption”, she had been in her younger days a co-worker of the late Charles Bradlaugh, M.P., and had suffered with him at the hands of the ruling authorities. Later she made India the land of adoption and devoted the rest of her life to the service of that country. She joined the Congress in 1914 and gave a new life to it. Her efforts to bring about a union between Moderates and Extremists ought to be remembered with gratitude. Sriji Hirenranath Datta, Attorney-at-law, of Calcutta, a theosophist to the very core of his heart,

had a great admiration for Mrs. Besant. It was through his intervention that Mrs. Besant, who belonged to no political party but soon rose to the position of a leader among politicians, came in close touch with Moti Lal who was leading the Extremist camp in Bengal.

She paid several visits to Moti Lal at the time to negotiate a rapprochement between the two sections of the politicians. Sometimes crowds gathered in front of the *Patrika* office to have a look at her hoary head and silvery white silken habiliments when men of the locality came to learn that Mrs. Besant had been conferring with Moti Lal for a re-united Congress. At this time her popularity had risen to such a height that on one occasion when she was to deliver a lecture on the political situation at the Beadon Square at 5 p.m., the square was overcrowded at 1 p.m., in spite of the hot sun of Calcutta.

About this time Mrs. Besant started her "Home Rule League" at Madras. The object of this League was to win Home Rule for India by constitutional means. The rules of the League were very simple. A group of persons in any place in India who agreed with the object of this League might form a league or society and choose one of their number as representative, through whom they might communicate with the General Secretary of the League at Madras. The members would have to pay Re. 1 (one) only as entrance fee and life subscription and copies of Home Rule literature were distributed among them to educate them as to how to establish Home Rule or Self-Government.

In December, 1915 when Mrs. Besant was organising her League, an informal meeting of a number of leading men was held at the house of the late Hon'ble Mr. Abdul Rasul under the presidency of Babu Moti Lal Ghose to consider the question. The result was the establishment of a Home Rule Association with the Hon'ble Mr. Fazlul Huq as Secretary, on the lines indicated by Mrs. Besant. A Committee was appointed to draw up a scheme for self-government and select men for preaching Home Rule in Calcutta and the Mofussil and some money was also raised for the purpose. Many

members of the Indian Association who were present in the meeting also expressed their desire to act in concert with this Association.

Very soon Mrs. Besant started her Home Rule League with a great furore. "This League proposes to inform the British people of the real condition of things in India, that she may receive justice when the war is over . . . . To prepare the way quietly and peacefully, the League undertakes an educative propaganda, for, Britain only needs to understand in order to do right":—Thus said "Leaflet No. I—What India thinks" published by the Home Rule League.

When Mrs. Besant started her Home Rule League Moti Lal joined it at once. As a matter of fact Moti Lal had been long crying for Home Rule or Self-Government in India. There was, therefore, no difference between the ideals of Moti Lal and Mrs. Besant. Moreover Babu Hirendra Nath Datta was a common friend and he did not a little in persuading Moti Lal to join the Bengal branch of the Home Rule League at College Square and accept its presidentship. The object of this League was to hold public meetings with a view to educate the people in political matters. To carry on agitation for reforms was no part of the business of this League. Moti Lal addressed many such meetings from time to time. In one of these meetings held at the College Square towards the end of 1916 Moti Lal concluded his speech thus:—

"Grand-children—the weight of my years gives me the right to address you as such—I advise you to do three things, love your motherland, love God and pray to God daily for the improvement of your country. Prayers from a hundred throats—a thousand throats—a million throats will reach the feet of the Almighty. The God of the weak will give you moral strength and bring you fulfilment of your hopes."

There was keen competition between Mrs. Besant and Babu Ambica Charan Mazumdar for the Presidentship of the Congress which was held at Lucknow in 1916; the latter was elected.

The Lucknow Congress (1916) was a fruitful one. It was here that the so-called Moderates and Extremists closed their

ranks and Hindus and Mahomedans agreed upon a common plan of political propaganda. Tilak attended the Congress with 200 followers. They came in a special train bearing Home Rule flags and slogans. Sir Rash Behari Ghose and Mr. Bal Gangadhar Tilak who had a veritable tug of war at Surat in 1908 shook hands with each other on the Congress platform. Babu Ambica Charan Mazumdar, who presided over the Congress and Mr. Jinnah, President of the Moslem League both demanded Home Rule or Self-Government for India. It appeared that the persecution of Mrs. Besant had not gone in vain. A scheme of Reforms was prepared by the Congress and the League. The Home Rule League also accepted this scheme and wanted to achieve the end by constitutional means.

When the Lucknow Congress was in session Moti Lal was unwell and so he could not attend it. But he had been holding correspondence with Mr. Tilak, Mrs. Besant and other leaders about the policy to be followed at the Congress. Tilak wrote to Moti Lal that the Congress should send some leaders to England for carrying on political propaganda. Moti Lal approved of the plan. Immediately the Congress was over Mr. Tilak with his friends Messrs. G. S. Khaparde and V. G. Joshi came to Calcutta and put up with Moti Lal at the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* office. When Tilak came to Calcutta he generally put up with Moti Lal. They shared the same room and sometimes even the same bed. Tilak was very particular about his food. He did not take his food with Moti Lal nor did he take any food cooked in the family kitchen. In this matter he was very orthodox and would himself cook his food in a verandah on the outer apartments of the building in a very neat and clean way. For his fuel he did not use coal or coke but used wood instead. He was a vegetarian of the orthodox type. But that is another story.

After the Lucknow Congress the agitation for Home rule became more keen than before. Besant, Tilak and Moti Lal Ghose put their heads together and meetings were held in quick succession to arouse the people from their slumber.

They called themselves Home Rulers. And commenting on their activities the *Statesman* said :—

“Though the Extremists now masquerade under the name of Home Rulers, they are the same men, as violent, mischievous and impracticable as ever. They ousted the Moderates from the Subjects Committee of the Congress and the result is to be seen in the amazing resolution asking for self-government by return of post. The goats have returned to the fold, and the sheep are likely to suffer until they can be rescued.”

The *Englishman*, which breathed its last only recently, also began to fall foul of these leaders. This showed that they had been able to do some solid work for their country.

In the meantime Mrs. Besant, whose activities in connection with the Home Rule League were gradually bringing her to the forefront of Indian politics, suffered great persecution. She was not allowed to proceed to Bombay by the local government. She had to deposit a security under the Press Act for her *New India* and the security was forfeited as she continued to write in her paper fearlessly even after deposit of security. The *New India* had to suspend publication. And at last Mrs. Besant was interned in June 1917 along with his secretaries Mr. C. S. Arundale and Mr. B. P. Wadia. A wave of indignation passed over the whole of India and Mrs. Besant who was already worshipped as a *guru* by the Theosophists became apotheosised in political circles as well. The Home Rule Movement got an impetus and meetings protesting against the interment of Mrs. Besant were held in important places. Even Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Dr. Tej Bahadur Sapru who were well-known on account of their Moderate mentality came out with two-column long letters in the Press criticising the Government's repressive policy. “Mrs. Besant,” wrote the *Patrika*, “is no longer a personality ; but a principle. The blow dealt at her is a blow to the cause of Home Rule or Self-Government.” A sword of Damocles was hanging over Babu Moti Lal Ghose's head at this time. A case for contempt of court against him was heard in the High Court and judgment was reserved. It was being freely talked about that her



would be imprisoned. In spite of that he attended the public meeting held at the Indian Association Hall at Bowbazar. In protesting against the action of the Government of Madras in internment Mrs. Besant and Messrs. Arundale and Wadia he said that :—

“The only effective reply that they could give to the policy adopted by the Madras Government was that all of them should become Home Rulers. The leaders of other Provinces who had hitherto kept themselves aloof from the Home Rule movement had publicly and openly joined that movement and they should follow their lead. He thought that they in Bengal and especially their esteemed friend the President (Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea),—he should say their leader—should lead them in that matter. If hundreds and thousands of them declared themselves to be Home Rulers it would have a very great effect upon the Government. In that way and that way alone they could retard the policy of Government, a policy which Government had started to stop the progress of Self-Government.”

It seems Moti Lal's appeal did not go in vain. For, immediately after the meeting was over a large number of people including Mr. C. R. Das, the Hon'ble Babu Bhabendra Chandra Roy, Babus Bijoy Krishna Bose, Basanta Kumar Bose, Gunada Charan Sen and others joined the Home Rule League.

Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea and some of his followers however did not join the League. Mischief-makers wanted to show that there was difference between the Congress-League scheme of Reforms and the scheme of the Home-Rulers, but the latter maintained that there was no fundamental difference between the two schemes. In a speech at Gaya, Surendra Nath said that the Congress-Moslem League Scheme and the Home Rule League Scheme were identical.

Mrs. Besant's internment made her so very popular that a movement was set on foot to make her the President of the ensuing Congress session and install her portrait on the Presidential chair in her absence. The climax was reached when the authorities prohibited the Calcutta Town Hall meeting protesting against the internment of Mrs. Besant.

A joint meeting of the All-India Congress Committee and the Moslem League was held at Bombay in July, 1917. Amongst others who attended from Bengal were Babu Moti Lal Ghose, Rai Yatindra Nath Chaudhury, Mr. I. B. Sen, Babu Bijoy Krishna Bose, who were all Home Rulers and Babus Surendra Nath Banerjea, Satyananda Bose, Provash Chandra Mitter, Krishna Kumār Mitter and Dr. Nil Ratan Sarkar. As soon as the order prohibiting the meeting to protest against Mrs. Besant's internment reached their ears they hurried back to Bengal. A conference of leaders was held in which powers were delegated to six gentlemen, viz., Sir Rash Behari Ghose, Babu Moti Lal Ghose, Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea, Mr. Byomkesh Chakravarti, Mr. C. R. Das and Mr. Fazlul Huq to chalk out a line of action. Some of them waited in deputation upon Lord Ronaldshay who was now at Dacca, explained the situation to him and appealed to him for cancellation of the order prohibiting the Town Hall meeting. In the meantime a meeting was held at the College Square in Calcutta under the auspices of the Home Rule League. Babus Bepin Chandra Pal and some other speakers addressed the meeting. Babu Moti Lal Ghose moved and Babu Hirentra Nath Datta seconded the following resolution :—

“That this meeting is of opinion that the detention of Mrs. Annie Besant and her colleagues under the orders of internment passed on the 16th June, 1917 is unjust and detrimental to the interests of India and the Empire; and that they should forthwith be set at liberty.”

The Government showed a conciliatory attitude towards the deputation, probably because they wanted the famous announcement of 20th August, 1917 made by the then Secretary of State Mr. Edwin Samuel Montagu to have a warm reception in the country, and permitted the meeting to be held at the Town Hall of Calcutta.

Surendra Nath Bannerjea presided over the meeting and delivered a lengthy speech protesting against the internment of Mrs. Besant and her colleagues.

Moti Lal rising to propose a vote of thanks to Surendra Nath said that the idea of thanking the chair was foreign to the Indians, who did not *thank* but embraced and kissed to show their approbation. So Moti Lal wanted to embrace and kiss Surendra Nath. Surendra Nath at once stood up and Moti Lal embraced and kissed him amid loud applause. Next day the vernacular paper *Nayak* came out with a cartoon representing Surendra Nath as "Surendra" or Krishna and Moti Lal as "Srimati" or Radha, hugging each other.

By the end of August, 1917 seven Provincial Congress Committees voted for Mrs. Besant for the Presidentship of the next Congress, though she was still interned at Ootacamond. But when the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee met under the presidentship of Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee, the Hon'ble Mr. Provash Chandra Mitter proposed that the Raja Saheb of Mahmudabad be recommended for the Presidentship. Mr. B. Chakravarti proposed that Mrs. Besant be recommended for the Presidentship. Mr. C. R. Das seconded him. The Raja Saheb obtained 34 votes and Mrs. Besant 30 votes.

Then followed a momentous event, the Reception Committee Meeting which brought Mr. C. R. Das to the forefront of public life in Bengal. The non-election of Mrs. Besant by the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, which to all intents and purposes was a packed body, gave dire offence to the educated community of Calcutta. They took it as an insult and humiliation to the patriotism and intelligence of Bengal. "Bengal would be outcasted and held in contempt by the whole of India," said Babu Gaganendra Nath Tagore who belonged to no party. That was the uppermost feeling in the hearts of the intelligentsia of the town. Sir Rabindra Nath Tagore characterised the vote of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee as "insolent." The result was that hundreds of them joined the Reception Committee in the course of a single day by paying the usual subscription of Rs. 25 and signing the Congress creed in order to set aside the decision of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and vindicate the honour of Bengal. Never before in the annals of the Congress was a

meeting of the Reception Committee so numerous attended and such enthusiasm shown. The meeting was held in the Indian Association rooms. Rai Baikuntha Nath Sen Bahadur took the chair. When the report of the last meeting was being read by the Secretary, Rai Yatindra Nath Chaudhury pointed out certain inaccuracies and appealed to Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea, who was the Chairman of the previous meeting to say if what he was saying was correct or not. Surendra Nath got up and said he did not remember and could not bear out Rai Yatindra Nath. Thereupon Babu Hirendra Nath Datta stood up and was describing what had happened at the last meeting when Surendra Nath interrupted him. Some unpleasant words were exchanged, after which Surendra Nath, Rai Baikuntha Nath Sen Bahadur and about thirty other gentlemen left the meeting. About 275 members remained. Moti Lal who was one of the Vice-Presidents of the Reception Committee was voted to the chair and the meeting unanimously elected Mrs. Besant as the President of the next session of the All-India Congress to be held in Calcutta.

A keen controversy went on in the press as to whether the election of Mrs. Besant was constitutional or not and Moti Lal and Surendra Nath who were in a kissing embrace at the Town Hall only a week ago began to fight with each other like Kilkenny cats through the columns of their journals.

The incidents that happened at the Reception Committee led some people to think that there had been a repetition of the Surat split. But split or no split the pulse of the country could be felt; the "Moderates" were found wanting and the "Extremists" captured the Congress. Moti Lal who now led the "Extremists" got congratulatory letters from far and near on being able to get Mrs. Besant elected, thus vindicating the honour of Bengal.

The two parties in Bengal, one led by Moti Lal and the other led by Surendra Nath went on alternately quarrelling and making peace overtures. In the meantime the agitation against the internment of Mrs. Besant and her colleagues bore fruit. They were released towards the end of September, making it

possible for Mrs. Besant to preside over the deliberations of the Congress at Calcutta.

Mrs. Besant had been interned under an act which was named the Defence of India Act.

The one important matter in regard to which public opinion in Bengal had gone constantly against Lord Carmichael's government had been the administration of the so-called Defence of India Act by His Excellency's Government. Lord Carmichael was ever anxious to take the responsibility of this matter upon himself. He had evidently been convinced that though the men interned in Bengal under this Act, as in other parts of the country, did not come before any regular court of justice and were not judicially tried, there could be no reasonable doubt in the mind of any one who had access to the secret *dossiers* which were prepared against them by the police regarding their direct or indirect complicity with the revolutionary propaganda in the Province. The general public however felt otherwise ; they thought that the cases prepared by the police could not be proved in a court of law.

The avowed object of these internments was to suppress the so-called anarchical activities in the Province. But far from achieving this object the internments produced only a contrary result. First of all, it was very doubtful if there were any anarchists in the real sense of the term. Then again even if they existed they were only a handful. The police were not able to touch even a hair of their body. On the contrary they interned a large number of innocent and sometimes even brilliant college students. The result was that not only were these youngmen irritated, but the sympathy of every member of their families was alienated from the Government. These internments directly or indirectly affected a very large number of families belonging to the upper and middle classes of Bengali society. Mothers and wives were deprived of their sons and husbands, who were mostly kept in places where their health was undermined. Sometimes earning members of families were taken away, leaving the dependants to look for

themselves. The careers of many brilliant students were cut short and many of them became nervous or physical wrecks on account of the hardships that they had to bear at the places of their internment.

The relations of these internees came in numbers to Babu Moti Lal Ghose for ventilating their pitiful tales through the columns of his journal. There were wives and sisters, brothers, parents and even minor boys who besieged Moti Lal in his office. No time was fixed for them. They came in the morning, in the noon and at night. And whenever they came he gave them patient hearing and did what he could for them. He would speak about individual cases to Lord Carmichael or Mr. (afterwards Sir) H. L. Stephenson, the then Member of His Executive Council and if no good results could be got he would critically examine the cases point by point in his paper. The cause of the interned was very dear to his heart, for he believed that they were mostly innocent but had been implicated by the police or the C. I. D., anxious to justify their existence. His intervention proved successful in many cases and many were set free either owing to his private interviews or owing to his writings in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. Yet when Lord Carmichael's term was over and Lord Ronaldshay came in there were over eight hundred of internees in Bengal.

Wrote the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* on the 26th March 1917 commenting on Lord Carmichael's departure :

"Bengal has made very little moral or material progress during the rule of the departing Governor. In some matters it is in a worse condition. It was at least free from the operation of the Defence of India Act when Lord Carmichael took charge of it. How disastrous are its effects! Over eight hundred of our youngmen, some of them possessing brilliant talents, are either rotting in jail under Regulation III of 1818 or are interned in different parts of the country. We do not deny that a number of them were revolutionaries in their ideas or connected with some *bhadralok* dacoities; but it is equally true that the vast majority of them are mere police suspects. The general public regard them as innocent and they are justified in doing it, so long as their guilt is not established by a judicial trial. They

are undergoing terrible punishments, uncharged, untried, undefended."

It was at such a time that Lord Ronaldshay came as Governor. So, it can be well imagined in what a frame of mind Lord Ronaldshay found the people of Bengal. It could not be expected that he would be given a hearty reception.

Moti Lal had a hearty welcome for Lord Carmichael when he was appointed Governor of Bengal. But when Lord Ronaldshay was appointed he viewed the appointment from a different angle. The fact that Lord Ronaldshay had been an A-D-C to Lord Curzon went very much against him. To add to this he had travelled in the East and had expressed his views on many topics of interest in this country. Like Lord Curzon he had also charged the Asiatic races with no regard for truth. He had also shown his special contempt for the Bengalees by calling them "sleek Babus". In his opinion Indian students were not fit to study the philosophy of Herbert Spencer or the ideals of John Stuart Mill. He had proclaimed that the Congress and the Indian Press were responsible for anarchy in the land. Moti Lal culled Lord Ronaldshay's opinions, published them in the *Patrika* and warned him through the leading columns of the *Patrika* that if he wished to prove himself a good Governor he would have to banish from his mind the unjust and unfounded prejudices that he had been cherishing against Indians.

When Lord Carmichael's term of office was about to be over Moti Lal and others, who had come to realise that he possessed a heart full of sympathy for India, organised a meeting at the Town Hall praying for an extension of his term. But before the date of the meeting the appointment of Lord Ronaldshay was announced and Lord Carmichael consequently asked the organisers of the meeting to abandon it, which had to be done. This was also responsible to some extent for the cold reception given to Lord Ronaldshay on his appointment.

At this time Mr. Francis H. Skrine a retired Civilian wrote to Moti Lal from England that "it is not fair to exhume *obiter dicta* thrown off many years ago, in order to prove that

the Governor elect was hostile to Bengalees." Moti Lal replied that "it was a tragedy of errors on both sides". If Lord Ronaldshay had announced that he did not stick to his earlier views the Indian Press might not have commented adversely on his appointment.

Francis H. Skrine was an I. C. S. of a rare type—he was a class by himself. When he was in Bengal he mixed very freely with the people. He was very fond of Indian music and joined and encouraged the Indian *jatra* in the towns where he was posted and in the neighbouring villages. He had to pay the price of his long residence in unhealthy Bengal villages, he was attacked with Malaria which compelled him to return to England and retire from the service before his term. In later life he opened correspondence with Moti Lal. His letters breathed deep sympathy for the people of Bengal, which is so rare among foreigners who have eaten her salt. Some of his articles on Malaria, the Great War and kindred subjects were published by Moti Lal in the columns of the *Patrika*. He wrote some beautiful letters describing the activities of the Bengali regiment in the field of war.

It came to be known through some letters of Mr. Skrine and Lord Ronaldshay's lecture at the East Indian Association that he no longer stuck to his former immature views regarding Bengal and her people. And wrote Moti Lal :

"We have one request to submit to his Lordship. We hope he will find it possible, like his great predecessor, to throw off all official reserve, when conversing with his Indian visitors, and permit them in their turn to speak out their minds freely to him. We would also take the liberty of drawing his attention to another matter. No Governor should forget that his first duty is to exercise his independent judgment and not to be a blind or unconscious tool in the hands of his subordinates, when the question of the liberty of the subject is concerned."

Lord Ronaldshay's handling of the Home Rule Movement though it was a perfectly constitutional one, did not show that he remembered or paid any attention at all to this advice. The Home Rulers were co-operators in this sense that they wanted



to achieve Home Rule for India by constitutional methods. But the way in which this movement was sought to be repressed made the leaders give up all hope of co-operation and the more spectacular movement of Non-violent Non-co-operation (to be followed by Civil Disobedience of laws, if and when necessary) launched by Mahatma Gandhi caught the imagination of the people as soon as it saw the light of day. Under this movement the goal remained the same, *Swaraj* or Home Rule for India, but the methods for attaining that goal were different. Latterly, however, owing to causes which are well-known *Swaraj* has come to mean complete Independence for India.

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## CHAPTER XLVI

### CONTEMPT OF COURT AGAIN

A Paragraph in the *Patrika*—Comments on the Constitution of a High Court Bench—Moti Lal and "Tiger" Jackson—Hearing of Case before Full Bench—Moti Lal Acquitted—Press Comments.

At about 10 o'clock on the night of the 21st May, 1917 when Moti Lal and my humble self were taking our meals together in a verandah near the one where he used to sit and work for the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* he was informed that a gentleman (whose name I do not mention for obvious reasons and who is now dead and gone), had come to see him in connection with certain matters regarding the Calcutta Improvement Trust. After finishing our meals we came out on the verandah. Moti Lal had a conversation with the gentleman, who told him something about the constitution of a bench of the Calcutta High Court to hear appeals from awards of the Improvement Tribunal. It is needless to say that the gentleman was a man of position in Calcutta—he was not only a Rai Bahadur, but was also a Member of the Legislative Council, a Commissioner of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation

and associated with a large number of public bodies in Calcutta. Moti Lal had great faith in him and he had on many previous occasions written paragraphs and articles in the *Patrika*. On this occasion he wrote out the following paragraph which appeared in the next morning's *Patrika* :—

“Something like consternation prevails on account of the proposed new constitution of the Appellate Bench of the Calcutta High Court before which appeals against the awards of the Improvement Trust are to be heard. It is known to the reader how this Bench was originally composed of Sir Ashutosh Mookerjee and the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Cuming ; and how latterly it has come to be presided over by the Hon'ble the Chief Justice and Mr. Justice Woodroffe. Rumour has it that for purposes of hearing Improvement Trust appeals the Bench is going to be strengthened by the appointment of Mr. Justice Chitty. Now, what neither the public, nor ourselves can understand is this special arrangement for such a special Bench . . . . . Why should there be a special Bench of three and not a Full Bench of five, on which at least two Indian judges could find seats? . . . . . The withdrawal of Sir Ashutosh has given rise to rather unsavoury impressions in the public mind, since this proposed arrangement is to follow close upon the heels of his judgment in the case of *Chandra Kanta Ghosh vs. The Improvement Trust* . . .”

In the above case Sir Asutosh had given his judgment against the Improvement Trust and the insinuation in the above paragraph was that he was removed from the Appellate Bench because of this.

Little did it occur to the writer or Moti Lal that the above paragraph could be construed to show a contempt of the Court.

There had been another article on the subject also and this paragraph and that article formed the subject matter of a contempt of court proceeding against Babus Moti Lal Ghose, Golap Lal Ghose, Mrinal Kanti Ghose, Piyush Kanti Ghose as Directors of the Amrita Bazar Patrika Ltd., Company and Babu Tarit Kanti Biswas as Printer.

A Full Bench comprising the Chief Justice (Sir Lancelot Sanderson), and Justices Woodroffe, Mookerjee, Chitty and Fletcher heard the case, which created a great sensation.

Now Babu Moti Lal Ghose and Mr. Jackson, Barrister-at-Law were on the best of terms. Mr. Jackson delighted in defending accused in criminal cases and Moti Lal delighted in exposing the vagaries of the judiciary and magistracy. The protection of the weak and the poor was the common tie which bound them together, and so they regarded each other with love and affection. They were rather familiar with each other. I may narrate a small incident, which happened a few years before this case. Moti Lal and myself were walking on the Mall at Mussoorie on a very foggy day. Suddenly Mr. Jackson and Mr. M. Chatterjee, the then Master of the High Court appeared on the scene. After mutual greetings Jackson said, "It is quite a bit of London to-day. I had almost tumbled against you." "That shows," replied Moti Lal, "you are growing in years." "Really?" said Jackson, "but I thought I was growing younger. Perhaps you do not know that I have married lately." Moti Lal said, "But why did you marry so late?" Jackson replied, "Better late than never. Moreover, you know I was so busy with my briefs in Court that I could hardly find time for courtship." And they laughed a hearty laugh in which I also joined.

So when the contempt proceedings were drawn up against Moti Lal he sought the help of Jackson. He was going to the Bar Library of the Calcutta High Court and met Jackson on the corridor.

"Well... Moti Lal,... what brings you here?" exclaimed Jackson.

"I am in trouble," replied Moti Lal.

Jackson exclaimed—"There can be no trouble to my Moti Lal so long as I am alive," and he rounded his arm about Moti Lal's waist as one would do with one's brother.

Jackson was briefed, of course without any fee, and he conducted the case in such a manner that it amply justified his popular name "Tiger Jackson." Space does not permit me to give a full description of the case. It is reported in the *Calcutta Weekly Notes*, Volume No. XVII. A detailed report was published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and other papers.

As soon as their Lordships took the seat said Mr. Jackson :  
—I would ask your Lordships in what jurisdiction this Court  
is sitting?

Chief Justice :—I suppose sitting here we have every jurisdiction.

Mr. Jackson :—No, I submit you cannot sit in five jurisdictions at the same moment. . . . I want to know where I am.

Chief Justice :—You will know where you are in time.

Mr. Jackson :—Unless I know that I cannot put my points. Two of my next points depend on that. If you do not tell me in what jurisdiction it is the best thing I can do is to sit down.

Chief Justice :—You may assume this is a matter of a criminal nature.

Mr. Jackson :—Then I am entitled to know who is prosecuting. . . . I want to know who my opponent is, and what the charge is? Is it the whole Court or one Judge or two Judges or three Judges or some one wholly irrespective of the Court?

Chief Justice :—Anything more on that point?

Mr. Jackson :—No. In the absence of an answer to that point I cannot possibly proceed.

Chief Justice :—Why not?

Mr. Jackson :—Without knowing what the charge is how am I to meet it? Is not this significant of cases of this description? The fact is I hope the end of the War will see the whole of this sham disappear.

Chief Justice :—What sham?

Mr. Jackson :—The Court dealing with cases itself in which it is personally interested. I protest against going on further in this matter.

Chief Justice :—We don't think you are entitled to ask questions of the Bench in the way you have been doing on these points. But inasmuch as you assure us you will be hampered in your argument if you do not get certain information we think it only right to give it to you although we do not think you are entitled to it. With regard to the question

of the Rule it was issued by me as Chief Justice of this Court after consultation with the learned Judges of the Court. . . . . The articles contained a reflection on the Court in its administration. Among other things it contained a suggestion that the Court was constituted for the purpose of hearing certain appeals with the object of counteracting a decision which has been given on a similar point by two other learned Judges of the Court, namely, Justices Mookerjee and Cuming.

Mr. Jackson contended that there was no legal evidence to connect Moti Lal Ghose with this publication.

Mr. Justice Mookerjee :—Do you deny that you are a Director ?

Mr. Jackson :—I am an accused person. Your Lordship will pardon me if I refuse to make any reply.

Mr. Justice Fletcher :—The statutory return shows he is a Director.

Mr. Jackson :—That does not prove his connection with this publication.

Chief Justice :—What was the date of the return ?

Mr. Jackson :—March. This is June. It is no presumption that because you are married once you are married always. Is every Director supposed to be cognisant of everything that goes out of his office ? If you think that is legal evidence well and good, and I don't wish to address you further in the matter.

Mr. Jackson then addressed the Court on law points and merits of the case and submitted that there was no contempt in the two articles in question.

Mr. Eardley Norton argued the case for the Printer, Mr. Byomkesh Chakravarti for Babus Mrinal Kanti Ghose and Piyush Kanti Ghose ; and Mr. C. R. Das for Babu Golap Lal Ghose.

This time also Babu Moti Lal Ghose narrowly escaped on technical grounds, as it could not be proved that he was responsible for the publication. He and the other directors were discharged. The Printer, however, was fined Rs. 300.

The Chief Justice observed in his judgment that "the Legislature should provide for the registration of the Editor, or the person really responsible for the contents of a newspaper, so that the responsibility might be placed in the proper quarter without any difficulty or delay."

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* retorted:—

"If the Government approve the recommendation of the five wise Judges of the High Court who tried the recent *Patrika* contempt case and pass a law making it incumbent on every newspaper to register its editor, then, we are afraid, we may be obliged to entertain the services of a prison-going editor."

It may be recalled here that at the time when this case was heard the law requiring the name of the Editor to be published in each and every issue of a journal had not yet been passed.

The *Statesman* made biting comments on the case, in course of which it wrote:—

"According to the numerous counsel engaged for the respondents this newspaper (The *Amrita Bazar Patrika*) is a fortuitous concourse of articles and paragraphs which assemble from the void and present themselves to a guileless printer who does not read them. It is a pretty conception which is not unworthy of the quaint fancy of Babu Moti Lal Ghose."

The *Patrika* replied:—

"The *Statesman*, if it has at all followed the recent proceedings in the High Court, should know that the above paragraph is a travesty of the arguments of the eminent counsel who appeared for the respondents on the occasion. Mr. Jackson, than whom there is no more fair or conscientious advocate at the Bar, following the traditions of the English criminal jurisprudence enshrined in the reported judgments of very eminent English Judges, which our High Courts have followed in India, when questioned as to whether he admitted that his client was a Director, said that he was not bound to answer that question inasmuch as an accused person owed no duty except the duty of defending himself. . . . . The persons before the Court were only the Directors of the Limited Company which owns the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, and they, under legal advice and in accordance with journalistic etiquette, were unable to

give out the names of the writers of the articles in question which, it is common knowledge, were outside contributions."

I have it on the authority of persons who were intimately connected with the case that during consultation among lawyers Moti Lal more than once wanted to take the responsibility of the articles on himself, but that the iron will of "Tiger" Jackson prevailed. "You must fight out the case," he said, and Moti Lal had to do so. Commenting on the case the *Bengalee* said :—

"Babu Moti Lal Ghose has rendered a great public service in fighting out the case against very heavy odds, for, after all, the ends of justice are dearer to all public men than mere private considerations."

## CHAPTER XLVII

### AS A BENGALI WRITER.

Early Bengali Writings—On Vaishnava Religion, Literature and Saints—A Jatra Party—Views on Literature—An Interesting Episode.

Moti Lal was widely known as a journalist writing in the English language only. That he could, and as a matter of fact did, write in the Bengali language also, was, perhaps, not so very widely known. This is because of the fact that in latter days he scarcely wrote in Bengali. So much so that he thought that he had almost forgotten to write the Bengali alphabet. One day, while he was writing an article he had to write a few lines in Bengali. When he came across a certain letter he suddenly called me and after having written the letter on the top of his paper he asked me if it had been correctly written. On my answering in the affirmative he said with a smile, "I have not written in Bengali for such a long time that I thought that I had forgotten to write it."

And yet it was this Moti Lal who had been one of the writers of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* when the paper was first started in Bengali in the year 1868. When with the passing

of the Vernacular Press Act of 1878 the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was converted into a wholly English paper, the Bengali portion of the paper was continued to be published separately with the name of the *Ananda Bazar Patrika* with the idea of catering to the Bengali-reading public. "At that time," to quote from an article written by Babu Ranjan Vilas Ray Chaudhuri, a nephew of Moti Lal, in the columns of the *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, "Shishir Kumar became the editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and Hemanta Kumar became the editor of the *Ananda Bazar Patrika*. Moti Lal, who was the right hand of both the brothers, became a writer in both the papers." Subsequently Moti Lal became the editor of the *Ananda Bazar Patrika* also, which position he held for a considerable time. The *Ananda Bazar Patrika* had to be closed down in 1886. But after a few years it was revived as *Sri Sri Vishnupriya O Ananda Bazar Patrika*. It became a religious and political paper combined in one. In this paper Moti Lal wrote articles not only on political subjects but also on Vaishnava religion and literature and lives of saints. He wrote several articles on the life of Thakur Narahari Sarkar, a devout Vaishnava, in which he gave a detailed and critical account of the "sweet form" of the worship of Sri Gauranga. These articles were remembered by Vaishnavas even after his death. He also wrote some articles on the life of Srila Ramtanu Bhagabat-bhushan which revealed their writer as a worshipper of Sri Gauranga in his duality, i.e., as combining Radha and Krishna in himself. Besides these he wrote a large number of articles explaining the esoteric meaning of the Vaishnava religion and giving expositions of the subjects of *Braja-leela*, *Mān-bhanjan*, *Māthurer pālā*, etc., which showed what keen interest he took in Vaishnava songs. These articles were highly appreciated by the Vaishnava public. After Moti Lal's death Srijūt Hari Das Goswami of Navadwip referred to these articles and wrote in the columns of the *Ananda Bazar Patrika* that "Moti Lal was not simply a political leader. His heart was softer than a flower. Such religious-mindedness and modesty and sweetness befitting a Vaishnava as Moti Lal had, in spite



of his being engaged in dry politics, could be found only among great men devoted to the Prophet of Nadia." It was only the other day (September 5, 1934) that Srijut Hirendra Nath Datta in a speech at a public meeting held in honour of Moti Lal at the Albert Hall in Calcutta said that "a prince among journalists Moti Lal detested politics which he called a dirty game. Yet he played a distinct role in Indian politics. But playing this role did not satisfy the heart of this *Bhakta*. Whenever, therefore, Moti Lal would find a *Bhakta* he would cry out, 'Bless me, so that I may be a recipient of the grace of Lord Sri Krishna.' "

While on this subject I may be permitted to indulge in a little digression. Those who have read *Vaishnava* literature are well-acquainted with the fact that Sri Gauranga, the Prophet of Nadia whom the *Vaishnavas* worship as God Incarnate, was very fond of *Jatra* performances and as a matter of fact Himself held many such performances at Navadwip in his youthful days. Moti Lal and his brothers who were devoted followers of Sri Gauranga also held *Jatra* performances in their native village Amrita Bazar in imitation of their Lord in their youthful days. When they had removed to Calcutta and had settled there they revived their *Jatra* party, with several young boys of their native village. I have been able to gather information regarding this *Jatra* from my mother Sajal Nayana (Moti Lal's daughter) who still remembers all its songs. The performances were mainly on Sri Krishna and Radha,—on *Abhisar* which dealt with the subject of Radha bedecking herself with all the ornaments that she could have and going out to meet her beloved Sri Krishna, on *Mān*, which dealt with the subject of Radha's anger on account of Sri Krishna passing his night in the floral bower of Chandravali, another devotee of his, and on *Māthur*, which described the lamentations of the dwellers of Brindaban on Sri Krishna's leaving that place for the throne of Mathura. Almost all the actors came from the village of Amrita Bazar, and they were lodged in a house close to No. 2, Ananda Chatterji Lane. The idea of starting this *Jatra* party most probably originated from

Shishir Kumar, who. was very fond of sports, games, music and other recreations. Rehearsals were held almost daily at the hall of No. 2, Ananda Chatterji Lane. The musical instruments consisted of the Harmonium, the *Behala* (violin), the *Dhol* (drumlet), the *Khanjani*, the *Khartal*, etc. The songs were mostly of Govinda Adhikari, Joydev or other *Mahajans*; many of these were adaptations from old Vaishnava compositions by Shishir Kumar. A youngman who played on the violin was the most intelligent among the group. Moti Lal taught him the songs and he in his turn coached the boys. Moti Lal also taught the boys as to how to dance and sing and play their respective parts. Sometimes he used to play on the violin also. The ladies of the family took great interest in the *jatras* and they dressed up the boys as Radha, Krishna, cow-boys, *Gopinis*, etc. The *jatra* party received some outside calls, amongst which mention may be made of their performances at the houses of the late Raja Jotindra Mohan Tagore at Pathuriaghata, the late Raja Peary Mohan Mukherji of Uttarpara and the late Ray Yatindra Nath Chaudhuri of Barnagar. The party, however, was a losing concern to the Ghose brothers who had ultimately to give it up. But they had a great love for the histrionic art and hence failing to set up a party on a permanent basis they not only encouraged others to set up some public theatrical parties but also attended their performances regularly. But the plays which they liked were mostly religious plays or social plays having a moral, *i.e.*, those plays which aimed at the uplift of humanity.

Moti Lal belonged to the old school of Bengali writers. His studies in Bengali were also confined to old writings, such as Vidyapati, Chandidas, Chaitanya Charitamrita, etc. I have never found him reading a Bengali novel, old or new. He was much averse to novel-reading. An incident comes up to my mind in this connection. Whatever might have been Moti Lal's views on the poems and writings of Rabindranath Tagore, as expressed in the columns of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, in private conversations he would never appreciate these. I had just passed the Matriculation examination when the poet got

the Nobel Prize. I purchased a copy of the *Gitanjali* in Bengali, an English version of which had won the prize for him, learnt many of its songs and committed others to memory. I tried to convince Moti Lal as to the beauty of the poems, their fine sentiment and devotional spirit. I argued with him and wished him to read a few poems. He would not read them. On the contrary, he asked me to read the book of poems entitled *Kalachand Gita*, written by his illustrious elder brother, Shishir Kumar Ghose, which I did. At that time I was an ardent admirer of Rabindra Nath Tagore's poems. So, one day, while Moti Lal was preparing for his bath and a servant was rubbing oil over his body, I came to him and said, "Now that you are not busy may I read out a few poems of the *Gitanjali*?" On his agreeing I read a few poems. I had a mind to read some more, but he threw cold water over me by saying, "Stop, stop, all this is nothing compared with the writings of Vaishnava poets—they are far superior to these. Read the poems of Vidyapati and Chandidas and you will appreciate my remarks." I thought that he was biased or had some pre-conceived notions.

After a few days Moti Lal brought two big volumes of the poems of Vidyapati and Chandidas, published by the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat* and began to read them off and on. I also read them to find out if they contained even finer things than the *Gitanjali*.

At this time appeared Rabindra Nath's *Gharey Bahirey* (At Home and Abroad), a novel in Bengali, which became the talk of the day. I had read it when it was appearing in the monthly *Sabujpatra*.

Now, one day it happened that a gentleman connected with the Calcutta University and having something to do with Bengali literature came to pay a visit to Moti Lal. I was present all the time when they were talking with each other. The gentleman asked in course of conversation whether Moti Lal had read Rabi Babu's *GhareyBahirey*. On his answering in the negative, he said, "O, Sir, what shall I say of the book! If books like this are read by our young boys and girls surely

our society is doomed." "Is that so?" inquired Moti Lal. "Well, Sir, the book is such that it cannot be read aloud by father and son sitting together." I could keep my silence no longer and entered my protest against what the gentleman had said. Moti Lal inquired of me if I had read it. His face became grave when I answered in the affirmative. Apparently he was thinking as to what to say to me. But before giving him any opportunity to speak I said, pointing to the big volumes of Vidyapati and Chandidas lying on his table, "If father and son cannot read together Rabi Babu's *Gharey-Bahirey* then they cannot read together these volumes of Vidyapati and Chandidas also, and especially the volume of Vidyapati." Moti Lal flared up, "Why do you read these books? You have no *adhikar* to read these books." This silenced me. Then the other gentleman, who dabbled in Vaishnava literature also and Moti Lal went on discussing among themselves *Adhikar*, *Brajalila* and other esoteric topics of Vaisnavism and I was made to feel that though I was reading Shakespeare and Milton in College I was not able to understand the poetry of Vidyapati and Chandidas in spite of their being written in my mother tongue.

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## CHAPTER XLVIII

### HUMOROUS ARTICLES.

*Jam v. Sandesh*—Ali Brothers' Appreciation—Secret of Moti Lal's Style—Plain and Simple Language—Sentiments Indian.

In the middle of 1917 Babu Moti Lal Ghose wrote a leading article in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* with the title of "*Jam vs. Sandesh*." The article was a very humorous one and was written in his characteristic style. This article was one among the innumerable articles which were dictated to me. In this article he regretted that Indians were gradually giving up indigenous sweets like *Sandesh*, which was a celestial

food, and had been taking to ham, jam and jelly, etc., which were foreign to the soil. After its publication he received several letters from friends and acquaintances congratulating him on the article. But the most remarkable letter was the one that came from Maulanas Shaukat Ali and Mahomed Ali, who were now lodged in the Chhindwara jail. It was a joint epistle, written on an "Exercise Book" running up to 32 pages or more. From beginning to end it was full of humour and one reading it could scarcely feel that it was written from inside a jail. "Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage." The Ali brothers were not personally acquainted with Moti Lal, but in their letter they opened their heart to him. With regard to the article they said that they relished it very much but they complained that Moti Lal had shown a bit of partiality towards the *sandesh*; he should have mentioned the qualifications of the *rasogollah* as well.

Moti Lal wrote a very charming letter in reply. He compared the affectionate relationship between the Ali brothers with the relationship that existed between himself and his late lamented illustrious brother Shishir Kumar and compared the love of Bi Amma, mother of the Ali brothers to the love of their own mother Amrita Moyee. He also wrote that he and his brother named their bazar and the paper according to their mother's name *Amrita Bazar*. My humble self was the amanuensis of Babu Moti Lal Ghose. I preserved the Ali brothers' letter for long, but it has been mislaid along with many other papers and letters of Moti Lal which I had preserved for a long time.

There was some reason why I was preserving these letters. I often asked Moti Lal to make some publication in a book form of some of his important and interesting writings, especially the humorous ones. As a matter of fact he had a personal diary in which the head-lines and dates of many such articles were noted down. On many occasions he referred to this diary with a view to finding out old articles for reference or with a view to refreshing his memory as to what he had written on a particular subject. He had also made a selection

of articles. But somehow or other the publication never came out. First of all, he was not very keen on it, and then, I was at that time not grown up enough to take charge of the publication independently of him.

The article *Jam vs. Sandesh* is but one of the innumerable humorous articles that were published from time to time in the leading columns of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. They were on a wide variety of subjects, such as *Horse's Egg*, *Makar Dhokar Law*, *Hobu Chandar and Gobu Chandar*, *St. Andrews' Day Dinner*, *Bhagwan Bhut*, *My Dear Konstam*, *God-deposed Europe*, *Molists and No Molists*, *Gopal Bhanr Counting Stars*, *The Indian Hookka*, "*John You Cut Me*", *Animals Tried by Court Martials*, *Drink and Be Great*, *John Bull and Rama the Farmer*, *Heat As It Affects the Europeans*, *Moustache or No Moustache*, *Lady of Irritable Temper*, *The Story of a Man who Could Bark Better than a Dog*, etc., etc., to mention a few among hundreds of articles. They showed what an inexhaustible fund of humour the writer possessed. But these were not simply entertaining articles written only for the sake of fun. They were highly instructive and in some cases they contained bitter criticisms of social evils or political tyranny.

Moti Lal was an excellent humorist and in his time the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was famous for its humour. Even the driest possible subject grew interesting at his touch. For example, his articles on such a dry subject as the Government Budget were captivating in all conscience as they were always illustrated with popular and interesting stories and written in a very interesting manner. Not only that ; he wrote them in such a lucid and simple style that even those who had only a smattering of the English language could understand what he wrote. I have seen letters written to him in appreciation of his articles by persons who could scarcely write two lines in English or failing even that wrote to him in Bengali.

The reason for this popularity of Moti Lal's writings was the fact that he scarcely indulged in heavy articles ; and never did he write in an ornate style. He had very little acquaintance with English literature, and even if he had any acquaintance

with it he was not fond of it, neither was he disposed to show his learning. So, his writings were not full of allusions or quotations like those of many others, who want to make a vain display of their learning ; and his thoughts and sentiments were not coloured with Anglicism. Many Indians who have got their education in England or who have been educated in India on modern lines consider themselves fortunate if they can think more like Englishmen than like Indians. They write in English, they speak in English, they dress in the English fashion, and sometimes they even dream in English. But Moti Lal's education was mostly in the Indian style. In the village schools in those days students were still taught on the older lines and not on the present English-imitating method. So, though in later life Moti Lal wrote in English, his thoughts were those of a Bengalee. The language was English, and very good English too, but the ideas, the sentiments, the thoughts—these were purely Bengalee. His metaphors or similes were not taken from the mountains of Scotland or Switzerland, nor were his parables and anecdotes taken from the Bible or *Æsop's Fables*. The unlimited resources of his own country supplied him with his materials. Above all, his humour was not borrowed from western literature. He showed scant courtesy for Addison or Steele. They were not his masters. But it was the unwritten stories of his own motherland coming to the present day from generation to generation, from mouth to mouth, that taught him his lessons in humour. His quaint manner of illustrating his points with these stories and also others from our ancient literature, such as the *Hitopodesha* or the *Panchatantra*, was original. His stories of Hobu Chunder and Gobu Chunder were appreciated by all classes of readers, young and old. The Anglo-Indians also did not fail to appreciate him and on numerous occasions when he wrote a humorous article the Anglo-Indian dailies of Calcutta (especially, the *Indian Daily News*) used to reprint it with the head-line "The *Amrita* in Merry Mood."

But a generation has passed away since these articles were printed and perhaps I am talking to persons who have read

none of them. How I wish that some at least of these innumerable articles could be printed in book form for the benefit of the present generation and, perhaps, of generations to come!

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## CHAPTER XLIX

### THE AMRITA BAZAR PATRIKA—A FAMILY PAPER, YET AN INSTITUTION

The Ghose Brothers and Their Descendants—*Amrita Bazar Patrika* converted into a Limited Company—Outside Helpers—Gradual Evolution of Machinery.

It has already been said that Basanta Kumar, the eldest of the Ghose brothers died a few months before the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was started in 1868. His next brother Hemanta Kumar, "the eldest of the brothers who founded the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* passed away to a better world" (to quote the *Patrika*) in March, 1892, just a year after the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* had been converted into a daily. Needless to say that it was a great shock to the Ghose family, the grief which the surviving brothers felt can only be imagined by those who knew the nature and extent of the affection in which the Ghose brothers held each other. The part which Hemanta Kumar played in the foundation and development of the *Patrika* was not an insignificant one, and I believe that if any of the three brothers who founded the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* did not exist or do his part, it would have been difficult, if not impossible for the other two to do theirs. The part which Shishir Kumar played is well known (*Vide* His biography in Bengali by Sj. Anath Nath Basu). The part played by Hemanta Kumar is not so well known to the public of the present day. His chief merits, I have been told by persons who were in the know, lay in acquiring friends and well-wishers for the *Patrika*. He was a devout Vaishnava and had a very



captivating heart, so that whoever came in touch with him soon became his friend and through him the friend of his brothers and the *Patrika*. His literary contributions to the paper might not have been so extensive as those of his brothers but he rendered inestimable service to the *Patrika* by going about the town and sometimes into the mofussils also and paying visits to the subscribers and contributors and men of light and leading and gauging their feelings. On many occasions he would move about in the villages among the ryots, holding meetings and explaining matters relating to the welfare of the villages.

Those were days of what might be called "Personal Journalism." The personalities of the editor and other conductors of the paper had much to do with its growth and popularity. The number of subscribers as well as the reading public was very small and unlike the present day the editor had a very easy way of ascertaining what effect his writings had produced in the reader's mind. *Mejadada*, for so was Hemanta Kumar called, would on many occasions act as a connecting link between the paper and the public. He was thus one of the main props of the paper and his loss was irreparable.

The death of such a brother was disheartening in all conscience. But the Ghose brothers were believers in Spiritualism—they believed in the life after death. So death to them was not total annihilation—it meant the passing away of the soul to a better world. Those who did good deeds in this life, they believed, had nothing to fear from death, but those who were addicted to bad deeds must suffer the consequence after death. "We are like caterpillars," Moti Lal often used to say, "and when we shall leave this dirty carcase of ours we shall soar higher and higher and fly about like butterflies in a garden of flowers." He referred to the human body as the dirty carcase in which the soul was enthralled. When such was the case it can be well imagined that however great the shock might have been the Ghose brothers bore it calmly and set about doing their daily work.

Another great shock, perhaps the greatest shock, in the life of Moti Lal was the death of his elder brother in January, 1911. "Babu Shishir Kumar Ghose, the chief founder of this journal," to quote the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of the 11th January, 1911, "left this for the other world yesterday (11-1-11) at the age of 71 . . . . . his chief merit lay in the high spiritual life that he led during his later years. He was the chief editor of this journal for a quarter of a century : indeed it was he who gave shape, life and soul to it. The lingering and serious illness that led to the retirement of Babu Shishir Kumar Ghose from public life at the latter end of the eighties of the last century formed the subject of comment in all the leading papers of the day."

Though in the latter part of their lives their activities lay through different channels, one wielding his pen in the field of religion and the other doing the same in the political arena of the day, Shishir Kumar and Moti Lal were very closely associated in their earlier days. To those who came to pay their condolence to Moti Lal on the former's death he said that he and his brother were like two flowers in the same stalk and now that one of the flowers had fallen the other would also wither away day by day. But let me quote what he wrote in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of 12th January, 1911 :—

"We have no right to thrust our private grief upon others, specially when it is too deep, too sacred for utterance. All the same we are but human, and we cannot speak of him from whom we were separated on Tuesday (10th January) without being overwhelmed with sorrow. They talk of conjugal love ; parental love ; filial love ; to us a brother's love is the supremest gift of God—the Fountain of all love. To lose a brother is to feel as if the heart were crushed out of shape. Babu Shishir Kumar Ghose, however, was not only a brother to us born of the same parents, but a life companion—a constant, almost a daily companion of over sixty years to whom we owe every little good thing that we possess at whose feet we learnt the A. B. C. of politics and a higher life—who taught us, not by precepts alone but by examples also that the highest destiny of man was to love God and love man. He was our temporal and

spiritual *guru* ; how helpless, small and miserable we feel in his absence. The void caused in our heart by his translation to the other world will and can never be filled up so long we are here ; yet he lives and lives in a better and happier world, and the conviction, rather the knowledge that we shall meet him again in due course, will, we trust, God willing, enable us to sustain the heavy blow which it has been our unfortunate fate to receive."

Since its very inception the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* had been a family concern. With the death of the eldest of the brothers Basanta Kumar who had founded the vernacular fortnightly *Amrita Prabahini Patrika*, his mantle had fallen upon his brothers Hemanta Kumar, Shishir Kumar and Moti Lal. Moti Lal and his brothers were eight in number, of whom Hiralal, who was next to Moti Lal died very young and two others Ram Lal and Benode Lal died almost as soon as they had completed their education. The youngest of the Ghose brothers Golap Lal joined the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* about ten years before the death of Hemanta Kumar. The gap created by the death of Hemanta Kumar in the management of the *Patrika* was filled up by Golap Lal though in another way and the trio, Shishir Kumar, Moti Lal and Golap Lal, after the death of Hemanta Kumar, went on conducting the paper as vigorously as before, Shishir Kumar contributing his superior intellect and advice, Moti Lal his industry and perseverance and Golap Lal his willing hand always extended to help his brothers whenever there was need.

The part which Golap Lal played in the history and development of the *Patrika* is still too fresh in the mind of the reader to require any mention. The unique tribute paid to him by the Indian newspapers after his death in 1932 reveals the nature of the work he had done in connection with the *Patrika*. He did the work of managing editor from the time he joined the *Patrika*, though the name of Managing Editor was, perhaps, then not in vogue and as such he was recorded in official papers as the Financial Manager. Throughout he rendered Moti Lal substantial help in the discharge of

his editorial duties by assisting him in selecting subjects for his writing. Golap Lal's terse and illuminating paragraphs were quite in keeping with the traditions of the *Patrika*. Some time after Moti Lal's death he became the editor of the *Patrika*.

Moti Lal (who avowedly had poor knowledge of mathematics) had to look to the financial side of the paper during its very early stages ; subsequently Hemanta Kumar did it for a time. After the death of Hemanta Kumar, Babu Mrinal Kanti Ghose and others looked to the management of the financial side of the paper, so that Moti Lal had since then very little to do with financial matters relating to the paper beyond being consulted as and when important occasions arose. Speaking about the management of the *Patrika*, I think I shall be accused of a glaring omission if I do not mention the name of the late Dina Nath Roy, who, though not a member of the family had none the less a great hand in the management of the paper. He joined the *Patrika* about the time when Hemanta Kumar died and soon established his usefulness, so much so that the proprietors of the paper left the financial matters to a great extent, if not entirely, to his hands. In this connection I must also mention the name of my father the late Nriya Gopal Dutt (Moti Lal's son-in-law), who was like a son to him and for years assisted him greatly by looking after his financial matters, both in connection with the *Patrika* as well as his zemindari estates in his native place in Jessore. Indeed I make bold to say that but for this relief it would have been very difficult, if not impossible, for Moti Lal to keep himself absolutely aloof from financial matters and devote himself entirely to the editorial work of the *Patrika* and other public works. While on this subject I cannot help stating (though it is a digression) that Moti Lal kept himself so much out of touch with monetary matters that he had not touched or seen a coin for several years, he had no personal financial account ; his income from the zemindari and his allowance from the *Patrika* office were taken and spent by my father during his life time and after his death in 1919 by myself and my brothers. As a matter of fact Moti Lal did not know what was his income and what was his ex-

penditure. How detached he was from the monetary world will appear from the following incident. Long after the old silver, 2 anna bits had given place to the new nickel ones, one day Moti Lal suddenly called me and holding up a new nickel coin in his hand asked me, "What is this?" "Strange," said I, "You do not know what it is. It is a new 2 anna bit." Moti Lal replied, "Yes, yes, I had read of it, but had not seen it before".

But to return to the subject of this chapter. Piyush Kanti Ghose, eldest son of Shishir Kumar, was connected with the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in various capacities from his college days till his death in 1928. He rendered great help to Moti Lal in discharging his public duties, in fact in such matters he was said to be Moti Lal's right hand man. His bright and fascinating narrative and descriptive writings in the *Patrika* were a treat for the readers. The late Parimal Kanti Ghose, son of Hemanta Kumar, and the late Nihar Kanti Ghose, son of Shishir Kumar, played their parts in the *Patrika* and were called into eternity rather early. Babu Mrinal Kanti Ghose, son of Hemanta Kumar is almost contemporaneous with Golap Lal. He joined the management side of the paper about the time when Golap Lal joined it, and inspite of his old age and weak health is still looking after the paper with the energy of a young man. At present he is the oldest member of the Ghose family and may he live for years serving as a connecting link between those who are and those who are no more.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was started in the year 1868 as a family paper. Sixty-six years have since gone by. None of the original founders are living, but the proprietorship of the paper is still confined to the heirs of the original founders, all of whom without a single exception are now in the management of the paper.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was incorporated as a company in the year 1908. Before that it had been a joint family property owned and managed by the Ghose family. In that year the business of the printers and publishers along with all the assets and liabilities was transferred by the then proprietors



# AT THE 'ATRIKA OFFICE'.

*Standing:* Nihar Kanti Ghose, Paramananda Dutt, Bijan Kanti Ghose, Tuckes Kanti Ghose, Satya Gopal Futt, Sunil Kanti Ghose.  
*On Chairs:*—Golap Lal Ghose, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Moti Lal Ghose, Mrinal Kanti Ghose.  
*On the Ground:*—Tagnu, Bela, Chhabhi, Piyush Kanti Ghose, Monu, Rabi, Sukamal.

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to the Amrita Bazar Patrika Limited Company, which was in reality a family business converted into a limited company, the shareholders being the members of the family themselves. Shishir Kumar Ghose, Moti Lal Ghose and Golap Lal Ghose were the first directors of the company and all the present shareholders and directors at the time of writing this (1934) are heirs and descendants of the original founders and their family.

Deshabandhu C. R. Das at one time wanted to purchase the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and as a matter of fact negotiated the matter with Moti Lal through a common friend and offered a very decent sum, but Moti Lal and other proprietors of the paper could not part with an institution which they had built up with their life-blood. The proprietorship of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* is thus still confined to the heirs in the male or female line of the four brothers, Hemaanta Kumar Ghose, Shishir Kumar Ghose, Moti Lal Ghose and Golap Lal Ghose, all of whom have been called into eternity.

There was a time when Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak also wanted to convert the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* into a trust property for the country. Wrote the late Sriyut Shyam Sundar Chakravarti, editor of the now defunct *Servant* newspaper and formerly a colleague and helping hand of Moti Lal :—

“Men like Bal Gangadhar Tilak almost worshipped the *Patrika* and its patriotic traditions. We shall be committing a treason to the memory of this great man if we do not give wide publicity to the feelings which he entertained for the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. When we saw him last a little before his death at Poona, his first and foremost request to us was to approach Babu Moti Lal Ghose with the object of making the *Patrika* a trust property for the nation. He even offered to come to Calcutta and join us in putting pressure upon Moti Babu for the purpose if we felt the necessity.”

The matter however did not proceed far.

By trying to convert the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* into a trust property for the country Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak was only trying to change its legal status. For, it is a *de facto* trust property, though not a *de jure* one. All, who have come



in contact with the management of the paper or know something of its inner circle, have seen that the paper is run more in the interest of the public than in the interest of the proprietors. The proprietors are intelligent enough to understand that the very existence of the paper depends upon its capacity to do service to the country. The country, they know, will love the paper only so long as it will be useful to the country. Hence they must look to the interest of the country first, and then to their own interest. It is thus that the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in a sense has ceased to be a private property. It has become an institution for the benefit of the general public.

Among the men who assisted Babu Moti Lal Ghose from time to time in the discharge of his editorial duties in the latter part of his life, apart from the members of his family, I may mention the names of Babu Hem Chunder Dutt, Kali Prasanna Chatterji, Shyam Sunder Chakravarti, Manmatha Nath Mukherji and Bipin Chandra Pal (the list is by no means exhaustive), all of whom have left the land of the living. Hem Chunder Dutt mainly did the duties of a sub-editor, but occasionally wrote editorial paragraphs also. He had worked long in the *Patrika* office. We saw him working during the Partition of Bengal agitation days and even later. He was a lover of fineries. His elegant dress, well-combed hair, scented handkerchiefs and *chudders* and his *gargara* (hubble bubble) with a long and circuitous pipe attached to it were in striking contrast with the simple and plain, and verging sometimes on being niggardly, dress and teetootaller habit of his employers. He used to take his tea in the office room, which was considered a luxury. Tea-shops were not running rampant in those days and so a servant of his brought a kettle-ful of tea every day at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Hem Babu minus tea and tobacco is unthinkable. But he did great service to the *Patrika*. Like tea-shops writers were also not as plenty as black-berries in those days. Hem Babu was a writer and hence his *khatir* can be well-imagined.

Kali Prasanna Chatterji, a Bengali gentleman hailing from the Punjab, had not unfortunately a long connection with the *Patrika*. But his position in the office was very high. He was a writer of leaders and paragraphs and his (as well as Hem Babu's) name appeared in many official returns as the editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.

The Partition agitation brought about the internment of Srijut Shyam Sundar Chakravarti. Moti Lal tried hard to get the internment order cancelled and after long correspondence on the subject he succeeded in doing so through the intervention of Dr. Graham (I write from memory and subject to correction) of Kalimpong and Lord Carmichael. After his release Shyam Sundar joined the editorial staff of the *Patrika*. His flowing beard, deep deliberation and his Mss. with inordinately big letters covering page after page impressed us very much. But unfortunately we were not in a position then to assess the real merit or value of his work. His connection with the *Patrika* was not also very long.

Babu Manmatha Nath Mukherji, M.A., B.L., a pleader of Bhagalpur came after S. Shyam Sundar Chakravarti. I have heard Moti Lal saying that Manmatha Babu had given him substantial relief. He was happy to find that at last he had got a writer on whom he could fully depend. Manmatha Babu had been a regular reader of the *Patrika* since his school days. Hence his thoughts and ideas, nay, even his language also, were saturated with those of the *Patrika*. So, when on account of his ill health he left his legal practice at Bhagalpur and joined the *Patrika* staff, they gave him a hearty welcome. Manmatha Babu had a fine sense of humour and a great command over the English language. Many of the humorous articles written by him under Moti Lal's direction created great fun among the readers. He excelled in entertaining articles. Generally he got his points from Moti Lal or had a discussion with him and then wrote down the articles in his own language. Moti Lal often said that he could now safely leave the paper in his charge. But as ill luck would have it Manmatha Babu who had all along been in indifferent health,

breathed his last in the prime of his life in June, 1915, leaving Moti Lal once more to carry on the heavy responsibilities of the editor of a daily paper. Babu Bipin Chandra Pal's help was now requisitioned. For a time he wielded his pen ungrudgingly for the *Patrika*. He was a man of versatile genius and was an unspeakably rapid writer. He wrote for several newspapers almost at a time. Immediately after writing a leading article for the *Patrika* he would write a criticism of it for a rival paper with different views. But he could not pull on with the proprietors of the *Patrika* for long. There was difference of opinion between them over the Montagu-Chelmsford Reform Scheme and he considered it a "prostitution of his intellect" (to use the exact terms he used) to serve the *Patrika* any more. Then came Srijut Jitendra Lal Bannerjea, M.A., B.L. But the wide corridors of the Calcutta High Court and afterwards the spacious lecture halls of the Vidyasagar College had greater attraction for him than the then dingy little editorial room of the *Patrika* office. For a time Dr. Sasanka Jiban Roy, M.A., D.L., came to the rescue. But he also did not feel tempted to leave the High Court. Babu Hemendra Prasad Ghose who had a long connection with the *Patrika* also contributed his bit from time to time. Several other gentlemen were tried but with no success. At last came Babu Mrinal Kanti Bose, M.A., B.L., some time in 1918 and he found the *Patrika* office more attractive than the Jessore District Court where he had been practising before. He stuck to his gun and on May 25, 1922 when Moti Lal was ill he became the declared editor of the *Patrika*, so that at the time of Moti Lal's death a few months later he was the declared editor of the paper, which post he held till the 17th Sept., 1922 when Golap Lal Ghose was declared editor.

In this connection I may mention that a large number of prominent public men often rendered voluntary assistance to the *Patrika* by contributing articles from time to time on various subjects. The names of some of them which just now come up before my mind (I am conscious that I am making glaring omissions, but I cannot help it) are Byomcase

Chuckerbutty, C. R. Das, Bhupendra Nath Basu, I. B. Sen, K. N. Chaudhuri, Kamini Kumar Chanda, Kishori Lal Sarkar, Ray Yatindra Nath Chaudhury, Babu Bejoy Krishna Bose (of Alipur Bar), Mr. A. K. Ghose, Bar-at-law, Srijuts Hirendra Nath Datta, Amrita Krishna Mallik, Dr. Sundari Mohan Das, and Mr. Sukumar Haldar.

A connected history of the gradual evolution of the printing presses, I mean the machinery for printing, of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* from the starting of the paper in 1868 down to the present time (1934) will certainly be interesting. But the preparation of such a history is beset with many difficulties, and it is almost impossible at this distant date to find out which machine was bought and set up on which date and how and when the older machinery were from time to time disposed of and machinery of the latest models gradually set up in their place. It has already been said that the first printing press which the proprietors of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* set up was at their native village Amrita Bazar, also called Palua-Magura. It was purchased at Calcutta and taken to their native village. The Press was a wooden one, called the Balein Press, and it was operated by man-power. It cost them only Rs. 32 at the outset. This Press along with all the printing materials had to be sold off when the proprietors of the *Patrika* left Magura and came to Calcutta. Immediately on coming to Calcutta they purchased another small hand press for printing. It was set up at a house in Hidaram Banerjee Lane, Bow Bazar in 1871, and when in 1874 they removed to Bagh Bazar the press was shifted there, and located on the court yard of premises No. 2, Ananda Chatterjee Lane, where it was kept for a considerable time. Originally the paper was in Bengali; then it became a bilingual paper, partly Bengali and partly English. But in 1878, with the passing of the Vernacular Press Act the Bengali portion was abandoned and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* appeared wholly in English. It was still a weekly paper and remained as such up to 1891, when owing to importunities of friends and admirers engaged in the agitation over the Age of Consent Bill it was transformed into

a daily paper. The Bengali portion was after some time revived as a weekly with the name of the *Ananda Bazar Patrika*. For a time the Bengali types were removed to a house at Haro Lal Mitter Street in the vicinity and separate sets of compositors were maintained for printing the Bengali paper. Afterwards they were removed again to a tiled hut in the garden of No. 2, Ananda Chatterjee Lane.

A large plot of land in front of No. 2, Ananda Chatterjee Lane was acquired in course of time—it was then numbered 13, Ananda Chatterjee Lane. It is now numbered 12. The press and printing outfits were in course of time removed from 2, Ananda Chatterjee Lane to a house built on this plot of land. The printing machine was originally run by man-power and compositors set up types with their hand to make up a format. In course of time Linotype machines were brought to replace the hand compositors and at first the Vacuum oil engine replaced the men moving the printing machine and then the Vacuum oil engine was also replaced by Electric motors. During Moti Lal's life time newer and newer models of printing machinery were one after another purchased, and their number also was increased. At the time when Mrs. Besant was presiding over the Calcutta Congress in the year 1917 the *Patrika* had attained the height of its popularity. Two Double Feeder machines in which the paper was then printed were unable to cope with the demand; the town edition of the paper would sometimes be printed even up to the noon. To meet the situation orders for a semi-Rotary printing machine were placed during the life-time of Moti Lal. Unfortunately, however, he did not live to see this machine implanted. This machine also grew out of date; and since, most up to date Rotary machine and a sufficient number of Linotype and Intertype machinery have been installed.

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## CHAPTER L

### MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD REFORMS

Self-Government, the Goal of India—Montagu's Declaration—His Visit to India—Moti Lal's Scheme of Reforms—Press Comment—Interview with Montagu—Montagu's Diary—Moti Lal, a Whole-hogger—Story of a Rich Sudra and a Poor Brahmin—Condition of the Villages of Bengal—Government's Internment Policy.

The history of the world shows that it is gradually throwing off the old or mediaeval form of Government, viz., Monarchy, and is step by step establishing what is known as the Democratic form of Government. But how far a real democracy, where the people are really governed by themselves and for themselves, has been established is still a question of doubt. And whether the change for the so-called democracy has been for the better or for the worse is also an open question. But many great thinkers and politicians agree on the point that self-government, which is another name for democracy, is better than good government and the terms self-government, autonomy, self-rule, home rule, *swaraj*, etc., have become almost synonymous in the language of modern politicians.

Now, within the last sixty years many minor powers of the world, who were either under some other stronger power or under a monarchical or autocratic form of government, have been able to secure democracy, either by dint of popular risings from within the country or by virtue of the intervention of some power or powers from outside. Great politicians have said that, in order that the world may be made safe for democracy, the subject nations in the world must be made independent and self-governing. Just as when a portion of space is rendered void of air, air comes from all sides and tries to occupy it, so if a weak power is to be found in the world the stronger powers from all sides are eager to overcome that power and occupy its place. India is one such weak spot in

the world and she must be made independent and self-governing and must not be allowed to rot in her weak and imbecile condition, in order that the world may be made safer for democracy.

For long years India had been claiming Dominion Status, Home Rule, Self-Government, *Swaraj* or by whatever name you call it—meaning thereby that she wanted her children to be governed by themselves. There were several parties in India too—some wanted severance of British connection, while others wanted to keep it. Their methods might be different from each other, they might differ also from each other in points of details, but fundamentally there was no difference amongst the parties. All, all of them, wanted self-government for India. But Great Britain had all along been turning a deaf ear to India's just demands. She was rather unwilling to forego her imperialistic policy and all along she wanted to keep India as a subject nation and exploit her.

But when the Great War of 1914—18 broke out between England and Germany, the former found it absolutely necessary to take the help of India. Though many representative Indians, including even Mahatma Gandhi, were for helping the British people at that time there were many on the other hand, who were not forgetful of the wrong done to them by their white masters and wanted an opportunity for severing their connection with the British Empire. Mr. Lloyd George, the British Premier, saw this and wanted to do something to allay this discontent. Thus on the 20th August, 1917, the British Cabinet, through Mr. Edwin Samuel Montagu, who was Secretary of State for India from 1917 to 1922, made the famous declaration in Parliament that certain reforms would soon be introduced in the constitution of India with a view to taking her nearer to her goal which was Progressive Responsible Government.

The next step of the Cabinet was to send Mr. Montagu to India to consult Indian politicians and prepare a scheme of reforms in the administration, in order to give effect to the above-mentioned declaration. Mr. Montagu invited schemes

from Indian gentlemen as to the future constitution of India, and like many other persons Moti Lal also gave his own scheme of reforms. At this time he also wrote a series of articles in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, advising Britishers, if they sincerely wanted to give self-government to India, to follow the method which the Americans had recourse to in order to give self-rule to the Philippine Islands.

Under the Spanish rule the Philippine islands were horribly misgoverned. The United States conquered the islands from Spain in 1898. The islands were then under military government for two years only. The Americans, however, took upon themselves the task of educating the Filipinos and training them in the art of self-government.

Within the short period of 15 years the Filipinos were given almost complete self-government. In these articles Moti Lal gave a history of the Filipinos from the time when they came under the control of the Americans to the time of his writing. Very soon he reprinted these articles and published them in the form of a booklet.

The articles and the book were very timely publications. Whole India was now thinking of a scheme of reforms. Moti Lal drew the attention of the politicians to things and events in a country which was the mother of democracy. The scheme of reforms submitted by Moti Lal to Montagu and Chelmsford was published in full in an appendix to the Philippine booklet.

*The Englishman* sarcastically commented on Babu Moti Lal's scheme. In course of a long editorial it wrote:—

"There is nothing restrained about Mr. Moti Lal Ghose's proposals. The new scheme is a whole-hogger—responsible self-government straight away and the devil take the hindmost."

But in this respect Moti Lal was not singular. Almost all the prominent Congressmen, who had interviews with the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, whether belonging to the so-called Moderate or Extremist party, expressed the same views—they demanded the whole hog, the whole of the reforms



at a time, and not reforms bit by bit, and that, at the sweet will or discretion of the British Parliament.

Like many other gentlemen, Moti Lal had an interview with Mr. Montagu when he came to India in 1917 after his appointment as Secretary of State for India. The subject of the interview was mainly the Reform Scheme which Government was about to introduce. Moti Lal got hold of this opportunity and tried to impress upon Mr. Montagu the futility of Government's internment policy which was then running rampant. He also brought to his notice some other crying needs of the day.

With regard to this interview Mr. Montagu writes in his book, *An Indian Diary*, under date Tuesday, December 4, 1917:—

“We had a long interview with Moti Lal Ghose, the charming old editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. He is a fine old boy, gentle in his manner, with a strong sense of humour, a devout Brahman, a fierce politician, thoroughly bitter, with a profound disbelief in public of our good intentions, though accepting them in private. He reminded me that five years ago he had told me that our Indian Empire was slipping away from us. He spoke fiercely of malaria, and expressed the belief that it is only the people themselves that can prevent the appalling death-rate, the frightful enlarged spleen condition, the decimation of the Bengal villages. Moti Lal Ghose has abandoned the Congress League Scheme, and goes for complete responsible government in the Provinces, with the Congress League Scheme for the Government of India. He is in a great hurry, and I begged him to be a little more patient—ten years was a long stretch in the life of a man, but very little in the life of a country.”

There are certain inaccuracies in the above note. For example, it was never Moti Lal's view that only the people themselves could prevent the appalling death-rate from malaria. On the contrary, he had times without number expressed the view that the Government who raised taxes from the people should give up their *laissez faire* policy in regard to the sanitation of the country and spend more money for improving the

economic condition of the people with a view to enable them, to have sufficient food and strength to fight disease.

Moti Lal has been described by Montagu as a devout *Brahmin*. But, as everyone knows, Moti Lal was a *Kayastha*, though he had latterly declared himself a *Kshatriya* according to the reforms inaugurated by the *Bangadeshiya Kayastha Samaj* and had allowed the young members of his family to take the sacred thread. No doubt he was a devout *Vaishnava* and had all the merits of a good *Brahmin*. But then there is some explanation as to why he was described as a *Brahmin*. In course of the interview with Montagu, Moti Lal illustrated India's demand for self-government by a story current in this country in which there was a reference to a *Brahmin* and this must have misled Montagu.

Mr. Montagu sought to satisfy Babu Moti Lal by offering to India two such departments as Education and Local Self-Government. Moti Lal's reply was that India would not be satisfied till at least the Police Department was placed under the control of her representatives. For, said he, unless this department were made over to the people it would like the Military Department of the Government of India go on devouring the bulk of the Provincial revenues. Montagu was not willing to agree to place the Police Department in the hands of the people. He said, "No, Mr. Ghose, you can't get it just now. You must wait a few years more." Moti Lal's rejoinder was that this reminded him of the story of the hungry *Brahmin* and the rich *Sudra*, and he narrated it to Montagu. The story in a nutshell is as follows:

There were once upon a time in a village a poor *Brahmin* and a rich *Sudra*. Now, everyday the *Sudra* would take dainty dishes and the *Brahmin* would take only some rice which he could procure by begging. But it is not possible for a beggar to get his food everyday and it happened that for some days together the *Brahmin* had no food and he was terribly hungry. But all this time the *Sudra* had been taking his usual hearty meals, which the *Brahmin* could see. At last the *Brahmin* thought he was dying of hunger and told the *Sudra*, "Well,

brother, I am dying of hunger. Will you kindly give me some rice?" "Yes," said the Sudra, "I will. Open your mouth. I am giving you some rice." And he took a spoonful of rice-gruel and poured it into his mouth. "Ah!" said the Brahmin, "You have saved me; but will you kindly give me some more?" "No, not today, but I may give you some more later on," was the reply. Poor Brahmin! He exclaimed in the anguish of his heart that he had done a most foolish thing, for the spoonful of rice instead of appeasing his hunger had only increased it and at the same time he had lost his caste by taking a Sudra's rice!

Moti Lal told Montagu that like the Brahmin he was not going to lose his caste by taking a spoonful of reforms only. India, he said, very badly needed Self-Government, and she would be wiped away from the face of the earth if she could not march along with the other nations of the world. England was prepared to give India only a spoonful of Reforms. How could she agree to accept it? "But", said Mr. Montagu, "This is the first instalment of Reforms, and rest assured you will get more hereafter." "Yes," said Moti Lal, "that is exactly what the Sudra said."

No wonder Montagu should describe Moti Lal as a devout Brahmin and forget the *moral* of the story.

Though Moti Lal had left his native village early in his life he never ceased to love village life and whenever he got any opportunity he pleaded for the improvement of the condition of the villages. So, when he had an interview with Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford in connection with Constitutional Reforms he availed himself of the opportunity of putting in a few words in favour of the villages. He actually suggested their visiting some Indian villages in the interior. He told them that it was their duty to do so as custodians of India's destiny, in order to see for themselves and realise the glorious results of bureaucratic rule during the last one hundred years and more. He said that only 70 years ago—remember the interview took place in 1917—Bengal was one of the healthiest provinces in India. The pick of the nation then

lived in rural areas and suffered very little from the effects of disease. And why? Because they had a sufficient quantity of healthy food and wholesome drinking water to nourish their bodies. There was then scarcely a family, however poor, who had not one or more milch cows to supply them with milk. Fish and fruits were plentiful. Rice and cereals sold at an incredibly low price. There was scarcely a village or hamlet which did not possess one or more tanks of pure water for drinking purposes. And now? It is desolation from one end of the province to the other.

"Can you, sir, name one country in the world," Moti Lal inquired of Montagu, "where millions of people do not get a drop of pure water to drink during the hottest season in the year—March, April and May? And what they drink is something like diluted sewage! And this has been going on for the last thirty or forty years."

Montagu seemed to be very much struck by the description of village life in Bengal and asked for the cause of such a state of things. Moti Lal then explained the situation in a few words. It is Malaria, which, he said, had already carried off more than half the population of Bengal and was yet decimating its fairest districts ruthlessly. When this deadly Malaria broke out in the sixties of the last century in a most virulent form and committed a terrible havoc among the people the then Government of Bengal appointed a Commission to enquire into its causes and suggest remedies. They found that the main cause of the outbreak was obstruction to natural drainage caused by railway and other embankments. If the Government had taken immediate steps to give effect to the recommendations of the Commission, Bengal would have been possibly free from this dread scourge within ten years, but nothing was done, and it has now taken such a firm hold of the country that it cannot be expelled without spending crores of rupees. But there is no money in the country to remove Malaria or even the annual water famine or scarcity. And people are dying like rats or fleas from fever, cholera and other deadly diseases.

Moti Lal sought to impress the fact on Mr. Montagu that the increase of Malaria and other diseases was an economic calamity which would rob a country of its most precious sources of wealth. If these fell diseases were to go on decimating the people or impairing their physical system in the way they were doing, where would the huge amount of money be coming from to maintain the costliest government in the world? He further pointed out that when such was the deplorable result of the last hundred years' bureaucratic system of administration, it was only fair that it should be replaced by Home Rule and the people given an opportunity to manage their affairs through their own representatives.

To another thing also Moti Lal drew the attention of the Government, the Viceroy and the Secretary of State. It was the policy of interning political suspects, which he said, was a potential danger to the country. I have already said that when the War broke out some people in India who were deeply dissatisfied with the British rule thought of becoming completely independent and severing British connection altogether. But this was only a dream. They had neither the means nor the opportunity for realising their ideal. Thinkers of this class became the eye-sore of the Government, who passed a very severe measure, the Defence of India Act of 1915, and began to indiscriminately gag and intern nationalists in various places. Thus many old veterans and young hopefuls were cut off from society. Many of these had to undergo untold and unheard of sufferings. And instead of reforming them this repressive policy converted some of the youngmen into the worst enemies of the Government. Through articles in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* Moti Lal drew the attention of the Government to the fact that instead of allaying the discontent this policy of repression would only aggravate it, the feelings of the Indian people would burn like fire under ashes and at the first opportunity a conflagration would spread which would be beneficial neither to the rulers nor to the ruled. In many of his articles Moti Lal exposed particular cases of torture of these internees and in some cases they produced good results, the

internees being released before their time or their comforts partially looked to and grievances redressed.

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## CHAPTER LI

### HOME RULERS AND LORD WILLINGDON

#### Tussle At Bombay

Bombay Provincial War Conference—Fling at Home Rulers—Tilak Interrupted—Home Rulers' Determination—Patrika's Caustic Comments on the Conference—Home Rule League versus National Liberal League—Tussle over Reforms.

In June, 1918 a meeting of several prominent men of Bombay was held at the Bombay Town Hall under the auspices of the Government. It had the high sounding name—the Bombay Provincial War Conference. Lord Willingdon who was at that time the Governor of Bombay presided. The Government of Bombay took special care to invite almost all shades of opinion and among the representatives present were Messrs. Tilak, Gandhi, Horniman, Kelker, Jinnah and others, who were either active members of the Home Rule League or had sympathy with the Home Rule movement. The gathering was representative.

At the very outset Lord Willingdon explained the object of inviting representatives of the province which was to assist him in mobilising men and materials for securing victory to the British Empire in the Great War which was then going on. Referring to the attitude of the Home Rulers he said :

“There are a certain number of gentlemen some of whom have considerable influence with the public. Many of them are members of the political organisation called the Home Rule League whose activities have been such of late years that I cannot honestly feel sure of the sincerity of their support until I have come to a clear understanding with them and have frankly expressed to them all that is in my mind. I do not wish in any detail to criticise their action or their methods

in the past beyond saying that they have not given the help to the Government that I think I was fairly entitled to expect from them in these critical days. Indeed I must frankly say that their object seems to have been at every available opportunity to increase the difficulty and the embarrassment of Government wherever and whenever they could. I can claim that my Government have always felt that in every country where there is any public feeling, any political instinct, there must always be an advanced party, the extreme left of our political life which is generally opposed to Government but which must be like any other party given full freedom of speech, action and opinion provided it keeps within constitutional limits."

Though Lord Willingdon accepted the disclaimer of the Home Rulers when they said that they did not want Home Rule at this juncture in a bargaining spirit, yet he did not think that their help would be of any active character.

After Lord Willingdon had finished his address a resolution expressing loyal and dutiful response from the Bombay Presidency to His Majesty the King Emperor was moved.

Mr. Tilak being called upon to speak on the resolution expressed deep loyalty of himself and all Home-Rulers to the King-Emperor. He said that they were all agreed to the first part of the resolution which was an expression of loyalty to the King-Emperor. But as regards the second part which contained an expression of the presidency's determination to do her duty to her utmost capacity Tilak wanted to explain how this was not possible under the existing conditions. This, he said, was a large appeal to make, but he was sorry to say that the Government had not proceeded on the right fashion to evoke enthusiastic response from the people. They were asking the people to give men and money, but Home Rule and Home Defence, he said, must go together.

At this stage of his speech Lord Willingdon as Chairman of the meeting interrupted Mr. Tilak and reminded him that political matters could not be introduced into observations on the resolution before the meeting. After some discussion Tilak remarked that if he was not allowed to make observations he deemed it appropriate that he must stop his speech. Lord

Willingdon adhered to the view expressed by him. Tilak did not finish his speech ; but immediately afterwards left the Conference.

Mr. N. C. Kelker of Poona was then called upon to speak on the resolution. As soon as he began to make observations on the same line as Mr. Tilak he was called to order by the Chairman (Lord Willingdon). Thereupon Messrs. Kelker, Bomanji, Horniman and Jamnadas Dwarkadas left the hall. The original resolution was put to the meeting and carried.

In connection with the second resolution there was a sharp passage at arms between Mr. Jinnah and Lord Willingdon and the former reproached the latter for saying that the Home Rule leaders were disloyal.

As a sequel to these incidents Messrs. Jamnadas Dwarkadas, S. R. Bomanji, B. G. Horniman, Umar Sobhani and some other members of the Home Rule League who were signatories to a requisition for a public meeting to be held at the Bombay Town Hall to support the War Loan withdrew their names from the list of signatories. In doing so they wrote to the Sheriff of Bombay that though they sympathised with the object of the meeting they must decline to attend any meeting presided over by H. E. Lord Willingdon in view of the insulting remarks made in the Provincial War Conference by Lord Willingdon regarding the Home Rule League, of which they were members, unless and until His Excellency withdrew his observations and expressed regret for his unwarranted aspersions on the Home Rule leaders.

The echo of Bombay was heard in Bengal. In course of a long editorial on the subject the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* observed :

“Lord Willingdon himself first introduced political matters in his speech. Not only that ; he also charged the Home Rulers with thwarting him in every way in the matter of recruitment. And when Mr. Tilak sought to explain the true position of himself and his party, His Excellency would not allow him to proceed on the ground of his talking politics. What a nice position for the Governor of Bombay ! He would pelt stones at



others and when the latter rose to protest he would gag their mouth!"

In about a week's time the anniversary of the foundation of the Home Rule League was celebrated in Calcutta by processions passing through some streets carrying Home Rule flags and singing national songs. A meeting was held under the presidency of Mr. B. Chakravarti at Beadon Square. At this meeting Babu Moti Lal Ghose moved the following resolution which was carried unanimously :

"That this meeting of the citizens of Calcutta enters its emphatic protest against the uncalled for remarks of H. E. the Governor of Bombay at the recent War Conference, challenging the loyalty of the Home Rule Movement to the Empire and doubting the sincerity of the support of the members of the Home Rule Leagues in general to the various measures devised for its defence ; and it strongly condemns the treatment meted out by His Excellency to the Home Rule leaders of Bombay in refusing them an opportunity for explaining their policy and attitude after having openly and wantonly attacked these in his speech."

In moving the above resolution Moti Lal said that it was not dignified on the part of a gentleman like Lord Willingdon to invite a number of respectable gentlemen and then to insult them under his own roof.

Meetings were held in many places, such as Bombay, Lahore, Madras, Amraoti, protesting against the action of Lord Willingdon. It was at this time that Dr. Subramania Iyer, late officiating Chief Justice of the Madras High Court and Honorary President of the Home Rule League electrified the country by renouncing his title of K. C. I. E.

In the middle of 1918 when the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms were still on the anvil, Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee formed the National Liberal League of which he became the President. The Home Rulers saw through the game at once. Babu Moti Lal Ghose, Messrs. B. Chakravarty, C. R. Das, Fazlul Huq, Ray Yatindra Nath Chaudhury and Babu

Hirendra Nath Datta, who were all Home Rulers, issued a manifesto in course of which they said that

“We have reasons to believe that efforts are being made in certain quarters to secure public support for the new reforms even if they should fall short of the popular demands.”

Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea and others of the newly formed National Liberal League also issued a manifesto saying that

“If this scheme will take us a long way towards the goal of responsible government we should give it our approval and support so far as it is satisfactory.”

In the meantime the Montagu-Chelmsford Reform Scheme was published. Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea blessed it by saying that “he was for accepting the scheme and pressing for more.” According to him “a good deal of modification and expansion ought to be made in the scheme, but he had no doubt that it was the first definite stage in the road to responsible government.”

Babu Bipin Chandra Pal who was now assisting Babu Moti Lal Ghose in editing the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* wrote a series of leaders in that paper exposing the utter hollowness of the reforms. Babu Hirendra Nath Datta also lent his pen, more accustomed to draft complaints and written statements, to the editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* for crushing the so-called reform-edifice to pieces.

The special session of the Bengal Provincial Conference soon met in the Indian Association Hall, Calcutta to discuss the scheme as framed by Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford and on the motion of Babu Bipin Chandra Pal (as amended by Moulavi Abul Kasem) the Conference almost unanimously passed the resolution:—

“That this Conference is of opinion that the scheme of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State is disappointing, unsatisfactory and does not present any real steps towards responsible government.”

A good many of the members of the newly-formed National Liberal League attended the Conference and made a good fight

for the Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme, but their leader Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea did not attend the Conference at all.

Three days after this the National Liberal League met in the same place under the presidentship of Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea and on the motion of Sir K. G. Gupta (as amended by Sir Deva Prasad Sarvadhikari and Raja Kishori Lal Gossain) passed the resolution,

"That while reserving our opinion at present regarding the details of the scheme this Conference is of opinion that the Report on the Reform Scheme presented by His Excellency the Viceroy and the Right Hon'ble the Secretary of State presents a real and definite stage towards the progressive realisation of a responsible government in India and the Conference welcomes it as a first genuine effort towards the creation of a sisterhood of self-governing states with a Central Federal Government responsible to the people and representing the interests of India on equal terms with the self-governing units of the British Empire."

For months together the "Moderates" and the "Extremists" went on throwing mud at each other, either through the Press or through the platform. A special session of the All-India Congress under the presidentship of Mr. Hasan Imam was called at Bombay in the end of August, 1918 to consider the Reform Scheme. Babu Moti Lal Ghose attended with the full strength of his party, but Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea and his followers did not go and issued a manifesto declaring their intention not to do so. The *Englishman* wrote a leader on "Surrender Not" and the *Patrika* considered him a "Lost Leader". The Congress passed a resolution to the effect that the Reform proposals were "disappointing and unsatisfactory" and suggested some modifications. So, the Bengal Provincial Conference, which was the first to consider the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, was fully justified by the united and unanimous verdict of articulate Indian opinion on these proposals. The All-India Moslem League presided over by the Raja Saheb of Mahmudabad also passed the same verdict on the scheme of reforms.

On their way back from Bombay, Babus Moti Lal Ghose, Bipin Chandra Pal, Mr. B. Chakravarty and Mr. C. R. Das were given a grand ovation at the Nagpur Railway Station. A large crowd of Nationalists of Nagpur headed by Dr. B. S. Moonje requested them to break their journey, but they could not comply with their request owing to pressure of business in Calcutta. Babus Moti Lal Ghose, Bipin Chandra Pal and Mr. C. R. Das addressed the people assembled at the railway station from the train. Bipin Chandra Pal said that he would stand by the Indian Empire and would never support the bureaucracy. Moti Lal in a few words advised the people to prove worthy citizens by deeds and not by words and learn to make sacrifices for the mother country like Narayan Rao Vaidya and others.

As a counter-blast to the Congress League resolution Babu Surendra Nath Banerjea moved the following resolution in the Indian Legislative Council, which was accepted, only two members Mr. V. J. Patel and Mr. Rangaswami Iyengar voting against it:—

“This Council while thanking His Excellency the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India for the Reform Proposals, recognise them as a genuine effort and a definite advance towards the realisation of responsible government in India.”

So, the views of Moti Lal and Surendra Nath on the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms were as poles as under. Later history shows who was correct.

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## CHAPTER LII

### MOTI LAL, TILAK AND GOKHALE

Tilak's Conviction and Release—Exchange of Letters Between Moti Lal and Tilak—Meeting at Tilak's House—Moti Lal and Gokhale.

On the 23rd of July, 1908, Mr. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was sentenced to six years' imprisonment on a charge of publishing some seditious articles in his journal the *Kesari*. Eleven years earlier, in 1897 he had been sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment on a similar charge. It may be mentioned that Tilak did not write the poem for which he was punished. It was written by another gentleman and Tilak showed unusual magnanimity by taking the responsibility of its authorship on himself.

When in 1908, Tilak was convicted once more at a time when he was fifty-one years old and was rather weak in health, people gave him up for lost. So, there was great jubilation in the country when he was released from the Mandalay Jail after serving six years of imprisonment on Tuesday, 'the 16th of June, 1914. He was recalled to life, so to say. All the journals wrote on his release and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* published several leading articles on Tilak and his activities. Moti Lal soon opened communication with Tilak and I flatter myself to recall that I acted as his amanuensis. The letters were long, sometimes running up to 14 or 16 pages. In these letters they generally exchanged their views on current political topics. Now and then they wrote about extra-mundane affairs also. Portions of these letters were also utilised by Moti Lal in the articles and paragraphs of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* word for word.

In one of these letters, I still remember, Moti Lal compared human beings to caterpillars. We are in this world, he wrote, like caterpillars moving among leaves of grass or plants ; but when we shall leave this world and go over to the next we

shall be like butterflies flying about from flower to flower and sucking honey from them. He was, he wrote, anxiously looking forward to the other world where there were no misery or pain or want or tyranny.

Towards the beginning of September, 1918 at the request of Lokamanya Tilak, Babus Moti Lal Ghose, Bipin Chandra Pal, Basanta Kumar Bose and Messrs. B. Chakravarty, C. R. Das and I. B. Sen went to Poona with a view to hold a Home Rule meeting. They all put up in Lokamanya Tilak's house.

A big meeting was held in the spacious quadrangle of Tilak's house. He was now under a gagging order ; so, though he presided over the meeting he was a silent president. His forced silence seemed to be more eloquent than his speech. On the first day Moti Lal was ill and was confined to bed. The meeting was addressed by Messrs. C. R. Das, Bipin Chandra Pal and others.

On the second day when the meeting assembled Moti Lal was feeling better and he came to the meeting leaning on Lokamanya Tilak. He was at that time more than seventy years old and the strain due to the railway journey and the days of Congress session at Bombay was too much for him. He was received with deafening shouts of *Bande Mataram* when he rose to speak. But he could speak only a few words. He said that he looked upon Tilak as his younger brother and the way in which people honoured Tilak was extremely gratifying to him. They were, he said, passing through great difficulties, but just as a particular worm, after a time, turns into a beautiful butterfly they had a great and glorious future before them.

Mr. Chidambaram Pillay who had been imprisoned for seven years on a charge of sedition in connection with the Tuticorin affairs had just come out of jail. He also addressed the meeting. Moti Lal had more than once written in his paper about the severity of the sentence on Chidambaram Pillay. Learning that Mr. Pillay was present in the meeting Moti Lal desired to see him and when he came up he gave him a warm embrace.

In the evening of the same day Moti Lal unveiled the portrait of Tilak at the local Sarbajanik Sabha and in doing so he said that none had suffered more for the country than Tilak and he prayed for a long life and greater service to the motherland for Lokamanya Tilak.

Tilak and Moti Lal met on several occasions. Their political views were almost identical and none of them took any important step without consulting the other. I have referred to Tilak in many places of this book and I do not think I should increase its bulk by a repetition.

For long years Messrs. Tilak and Gokhale had been sturdy political opponents. Moti Lal and Tilak were life-long friends. Naturally therefore in the field of politics though Moti Lal and Gokhale agreed in many matters, there was great difference between them in others. Gokhale was for co-operation with the Government, while Moti Lal was generally in opposition with the Government. But the divergence of the political methods to be followed did not take away a bit from their personal friendship. So, in private life Moti Lal and Gokhale were great friends though in public life they would often stand on different platforms or lead different political camps. The last time that Moti Lal and Gokhale met was in Calcutta when the latter came there as a member of the Public Services Commission. Gokhale, who was then suffering from fever, said, "I have absolutely no rest ; the only thought uppermost in my mind is how to meet our opponents in the Commission. They are many, I am single-handed. The result is I am killing myself, but I must do my duty even if I have to die in the attempt." He continued in a mournful tone and said to the effect, "I have no wife—that is a blessing. But my two little daughters and the family of my deceased elder brother whom I looked upon as my father sit like a nightmare on my breast, for I have made no provision for them." How noble, how touching! Gokhale devoted his talents for the service of the motherland and not in acquiring money for his family.

During the unfortunate controversy over the Congress at Madras in 1914, about twelve days before his death Gokhale

wrote a long letter to Moti Lal regarding a united Congress. On his death in February 1915, Moti Lal wrote, "There is no doubt he is now in a better and happier world—this fact should console his sorrowing relations, friends and countrymen who are bitterly weeping for him."

In a meeting of the residents of Calcutta held at the Town Hall on Tuesday, the 2nd March 1915 to express sorrow at the death of Gokhale, Moti Lal said in course of his speech :—

"Twenty years ago, the great Ranade, who made Gokhale what he was, brought him one morning to our place and presented him to us as a young man of great promise who, he said, was destined to be one of the foremost men of India. Mr. Ranade's prophecy was fulfilled to the letter, but alas, our evil star was in the ascendant and so we lost a jewel of a man and that at a time when we needed his services most."

## CHAPTER LIII

### MOTI LAL AND LORD RONALDSHAY

Meeting With Ronaldshay Deferred—Sir C. M. Ghose Memorial Meeting—Moti Lal's Speech—Governor Advised to Wear *Dhoti*—Ronaldshay's Reply.

Though Moti Lal was on very intimate terms with Lord Carmichael and his Private Secretary Mr. W. R. Gourlay and though the latter became the Private Secretary of Lord Ronaldshay when he came as Governor of Bengal, Moti Lal had no interview with Lord Ronaldshay for a pretty long time. This was partly due to Moti Lal's adverse criticism of the appointment of Lord Ronaldshay and partly due to Moti Lal's not signing the "Visitor's Book" kept for the purpose in the Government House. There might have been other causes also. I make no secret of the fact that Moti Lal was very anxious to meet Lord Ronaldshay and in private conversation often expressed his disappointment for Lord Ronaldshay not inviting him. "And why does he not invite you?" enquired I.



"Because, I have not signed the Visitor's Book. Those who do not sign the Visitor's Book are not generally invited."

Moti Lal had given up all hope of meeting Lord Ronaldshay when an opportunity came unsought for. It happened in this way.

Sir Chandra Madhab Ghose, whom Moti Lal looked upon as his elder brother and with whom he had spent many a pleasant day at Deoghur and at Darjeeling died in Calcutta on the 20th of January, 1918. A very largely attended public meeting of the citizens of Calcutta was held at the Dalhousie Institute in April, 1918 to do honour to the memory of the departed great. Lord Ronaldshay presided. After Lord Ronaldshay, Sir Gurudas Banerjee, Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee and others had spoken, Babu Moti Lal Ghose rose to thank His Excellency on behalf of the organisers of the meeting. In doing so he spoke in such a manner that Lord Ronaldshay was at once attracted to his peculiar personality.

At this meeting Moti Lal asked Lord Ronaldshay to wear the *dhoti* like a Bengalee.

Mr. R. D. Mehta proposed a vote of thanks to His Excellency. In seconding the motion for a vote of thanks Babu Moti Lal said :—

"I have much pleasure in seconding this resolution and can say frankly and unreservedly that His Excellency has conferred on us a great obligation by not only associating himself with this evening's function, but taking the principal part in its proceedings. The late Sir Chandra Madhab Ghose was a great man of whom we are all proud. It is but fit that the Governor of the Province should preside over his memorial meeting. If His Excellency could see his way to mix with us more frequently in such social functions, we might gradually forget that we were living under an alien rule. Why, in due course, who knows that His Excellency might not take a fancy for some of our national costumes and adopt the same to show his affection for his land of temporary adoption? Take for instance, the matter of wearing *dhooti* in this grilling summer heat. His Excellency might put it on and be more comfortable than he is under his heavy clothing and at the same time

gratify our national pride. I proposed this very question to our late Governor Lord Carmichael. I found him one day in April almost perspiring in the Government House. I was in my *dhooti* and shirt. I asked, 'why does not Your Excellency take to our *dhooti*?' 'Because, we are a stupid people', said he. I replied, 'No my Lord. If you don't take to our *dhooti*, it is not because you are stupid, but because you love your national costume so passionately that you would rather be roasted like a fowl by the summer and autumn heat than agree to give it up'. But the conduct of some of our eminent countrymen is really inexplicable. Born and brought up as Indians, why should they abandon their national dress and bring misery on themselves by adopting the costume of another people? And then, my Lord, we have another comfort in this hot season which I am afraid it is not the lot of Englishmen ever to enjoy. I mean the rubbing of our bodies with mustard oil. It keeps off the heat and cools the body and produces a peculiar sensation of pleasure during the process of the massage. I am sure if Your Excellency could associate with us more frequently, you would discover several things in our mode of living and social system which you might be tempted to utilise for your own pleasure and win the affection of the people. I will not dwell on the merits of the great man to commemorate whose memory we have assembled here this night. This has been done fully and ably by previous speakers. I will repeat once more that Your Excellency has done us great honour by presiding over this night's meeting. And may God enable Your Excellency to fulfil your great mission to this country, which is to make the tens of millions of people entrusted to your care happy and contented by your beneficent rule."

The speech was delivered in such a serio-comic vein that the whole house was taken by surprise and there was a sound of muffled laughter coming from every corner of the hall. The usual practice in public meetings is that it is dissolved as soon as the vote of thanks is given to the Chairman. On this occasion Moti Lal's speech was so very impressive that Lord Ronaldshay had to speak a few words by way of reply. Said Lord Ronaldshay :—

"I cannot close this meeting without expressing my gratitude for the kindly words which you have used with

regard to myself. Babu Moti Lal Ghose was good enough to say that if I attended meetings of this kind sufficiently often he might forget that he was living under an alien rule. Well, gentlemen, no man is responsible for his own birth ; it is not his fault that he is born in one country or in another country, but I can assure Babu Moti Lal Ghose that a man can have the best interest of the country of adoption for the time-being at heart and he can put himself into the position of a son of the soil. Babu Moti Lal Ghose twitted me about my heavy broad cloth. Well, there is something to be said for his point of view, but then again I can assure him that one's heart may be true whether it beats under this broad cloth of my own country or within the more airy habiliments of Babu Moti Lal Ghose. Gentlemen, I thank you for the cordiality with which you have been good enough to receive this vote of thanks, and my last word should be that it is not I who should be thanked but it is you who deserve my thanks for giving me this opportunity of presiding at a gathering of this kind to commemorate the memory of so great a man."

When the meeting was over Mr. W. R. Gourlay, Private Secretary to the Governor, met Babu Moti Lal in a corner of the meeting hall and told him that the Governor was very much impressed with his remarks and had asked him to enquire if he would agree to see His Excellency at the Government House. Moti Lal replied that the matter rested entirely with the Governor, for, if His Excellency summoned him to come, he was bound to go, but then he must have the liberty of going in his *dhooti*.

Next morning Moti Lal received a letter from Mr. Gourlay informing him that His Excellency would be glad to receive him at the Government House and a date and time were fixed. The interview at last did take place. Besides current political topics they talked on Spiritualism and Indian Philosophy, in which subjects His Excellency showed keen interest.

Since then Moti Lal and Lord Ronaldshay had several interviews with each other. But then Moti Lal could never become familiar with Lord Ronaldshay as he was with Lord Carmichael, apparently because Lord Ronaldshay had a touch of the "superior purzon" like Lord Curzon.

Moti Lal's remarks on the Governor's dress elicited the following comments from the writer of the "Here and There" column of the *Statesman* :—

"A correspondent writes :—The exhortation given by Babu Moti Lal Ghose to Lord Ronaldshay to wear a *dhoti* and *chadar* moves me to break a silence which I have hitherto preserved out of respect for my esteemed friend the reputed editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. I meant to have spoken my mind to him when we last embraced, but my heart was too full. I then decided to await an invitation to his hospitable office to eat *jellabies*. But the invitation never came. I must, therefore, resort to the public press, not, I fear, a fit place to discuss purely personal matters.

"Now, I yield to no one in my admiration for Moti Babu, for his wit, his rich and varied spiritual experiences, or his profound speculations on the defects of the British character. But, I say it with pain, he has one weak point. He is not fit to wear a *dhoti* and *chadar*. He does discredit to these garments. I appeal to all Bengali æsthetes on the subject. The *dhoti* and *chadar* if they are to be worn properly require a certain build, a swelling port, a touch of the swagger of a Roman Senator. If I want to see them carried majestically I hang round some college whither Sir Ashutosh Mookerjee is to lead the University Commission. Ah! what a figure is that, what dignity! But as for Moti Babu—well, plain living and high thinking are doubtless good things in their way. All I say is they are not the regimen for a man who wishes to do justice to our national costume. Let me be frank. What my friend Moti Babu needs is a cassock or ulster something which will help him to cast a shadow."

This was certainly a very good tit for tat. I have not been able to make out who the writer of the above was. Perhaps, it was Mr. A. J. F. Blair, a journalist who was a great friend of Moti Lal and who had no mean repute for humour.

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## CHAPTER LIV

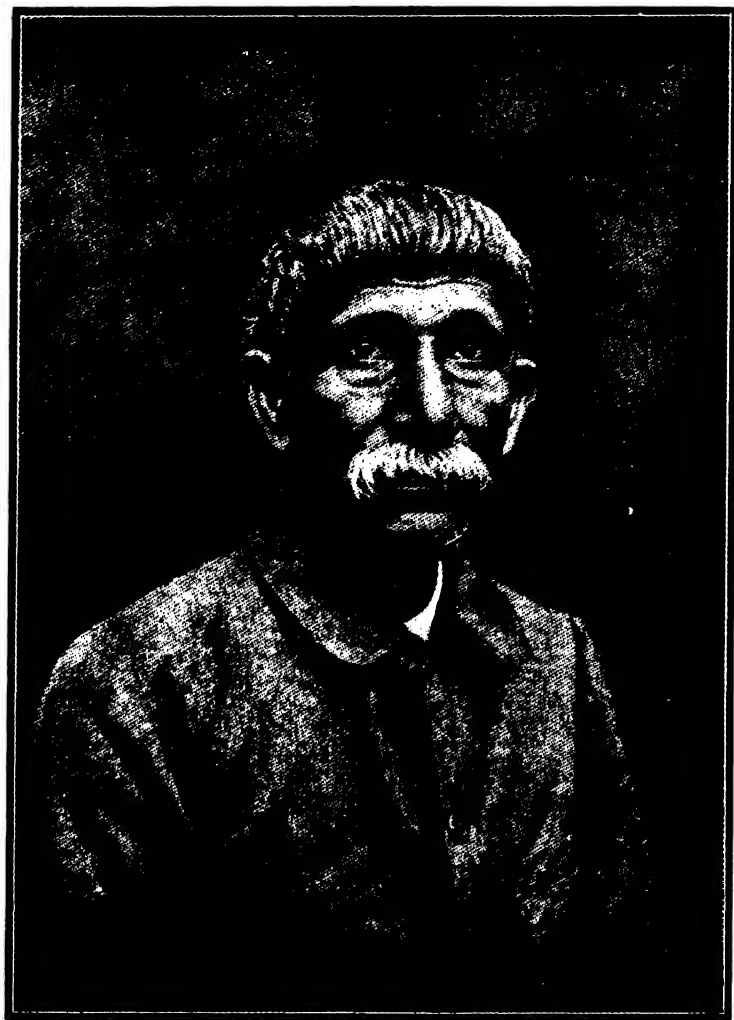
### AFTER THE WAR.

India's War Service—Rowlatt Bills—Town Hall Meeting—Mr. Gandhi Disillusioned—Martial Law in the Punjab—Moti Lal's Condemnation—The Question of Turkey—Patrika's Security Forfeited—Fresh Security of Rs. 10,000 Demanded.

The end of 1918 saw the end of the Great War in England. The beginning of 1919 saw the beginning of a new era of repression in India. The Montagu-Chelmsford reform scheme had succeeded in rallying the Moderates round the Government. But the Extremists were too wily or intelligent to be caught in the net. They carried on their agitation for Home Rule or self-government with greater vigour. Since the outbreak of the War they had suspended to some degree their demand for a better system of administration in India. The Home Rule League which was started during the War did not carry its agitation beyond educating the people. They allowed India to be bled white during the War and all the time expected that after the War was over their grievances would be redressed. India spared neither men nor money for helping Great Britain in the War and her services had been publicly recognised by the Premier, the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy. All these had induced India to conjure up a bright future before her as soon as the War was over.

But by a strange irony of fate things took an exactly opposite turn. The end of the War strengthened the British Government to flout public opinion in India. And hence in pursuance of the Rowlatt Committee's Report, which saw a spook in every bush, the Government of India which was only a handmaid of the Government of Britain brought two bills before the Indian Legislative Council, which made great inroads upon the freedom of the people. The public christened them as Rowlatt Bills, Black Bills etc. Under these Bills the





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Executive were given the power to suppress any movement, political or otherwise, by imposing penalties upon whomsoever they pleased without any proper judicial trial; the Executive were given additional powers to arrest a person without warrant and to imprison him for two years without any judicial trial; and the detainees were placed entirely at the mercy of the Executive and might be punished by them without any judicial trial. And all this was to be done in the name of law and order!

The Rowlatt Bills were too bitter to be swallowed by India without protest. As soon as the public came to know of these bills they started an agitation against them comparable only to the agitation against the Partition of Bengal in 1905-06. The whole of India was convulsed and public meetings condemning and protesting against the bills were held in almost every important place in India.

On the 3rd February one such monster meeting was held at the Town Hall of Calcutta under the presidentship of Mr. B. Chakravarti. Every intelligent Indian thought that the Bills if passed would mean a calamity to them—while they were wanting greater freedom of speech and action for the people the Bills if passed would tighten the grip of the Executive over them. So, Extremists and Moderates sunk their differences for a time and rubbed their shoulders on a common platform. The gathering was so very great that an overflow meeting had to be held outside the Town Hall presided over by Mr. C. R. Das. In spite of his old age and weak health Moti Lal attended this meeting. He felt it like a call of duty to be present at the meeting. Accompanied by his friend Ray Yatindra Nath Chaudhuri he arrived at the meeting a little after 5 P.M. The audience according to the lowest computation numbered 5,000. So it was an uphill task for him, a frail old man of over 70, to pass through the over-crowded stair case. But he was literally carried aloft over the heads of the people amidst cheers and placed on a chair where the other speakers



were seated. Moti Lal moved the first and main resolution of the meeting which recorded an

“emphatic protest against Bill no. 1 of 1919 which if passed into law would seriously interfere with the liberty of the subject and the fair trial of persons accused of sedition and other political offences, and against Bill no. 2 of 1919 which by permanently enacting the provisions of the Defence of India Act and by its other provisions will place in the hands of the Indian Executive and the Police such arbitrary and irresponsible powers as are inconsistent with the fundamental rights and liberties of the British subject and repugnant to all civilised ideas about the administration of law and justice.

“This meeting is of opinion that having regard to India’s whole hearted co-operation in the War and the peace and quiet now prevailing in the country and the absence of even erratic and sporadic political offences since some time past it is unnecessary, unjust, unwise and inexpedient to introduce such reactionary and repressive measures of legislation into the Imperial Legislative Council at the present moment ; and the meeting further urges that in view of the early introduction of responsible Government into India, the Government should refrain from introducing the proposed Bills, or at any rate, should postpone them until the Legislature in India is reconstituted on a popular basis.”

Moti Lal was unwell and too weak to deliver a speech. He, therefore, asked Babu Bipin Chandra Pal, who was gifted with a stentorian voice, to read the Resolution for him. He was seconded by Babu Satyananda Basu. Babu Bipin Chandra Pal and Maulavi Fazlul Huq also spoke on the resolution and electrified the audience with their eloquence. Sir P. C. Roy, who also spoke, said that this was an occasion which compelled him to leave his test-tube to attend to the call of the country.

But the Government was obdurate and would not listen to words of good counsel. Mr. Gandhi who had helped the Government in recruiting soldiers for the War and hoped that Government would certainly be more humane to the Indians after the War was over, was disillusioned and became ready to fight the Black Bills with his non-violent weapon of *Satyagraha* or Passive Resistance. But in spite of all popular agitation and protest from every nook and corner of India the

Black Bills were passed into law as the 'Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act on the 18th of March, 1919 to show to the Indians their utter helplessness and complete powerlessness to influence the Government of the country. The only Indian who voted for the Bill was Sir Sankaran Nair; otherwise the Indians voted *en bloc* against the Bill. Mr. Jinnah resigned his membership of the Imperial Council and in doing so he wrote to the Viceroy a strongly-worded letter in course of which he said:—

“In my opinion a Government that passes or sanctions such law in times of peace forfeits its claim to be called a civilised Government.”

Mr. Gandhi called upon his countrymen to observe Sunday the 6th April as a day of prayer and fasting. Moti Lal Ghose, B. Chakravarti and other Bengal leaders issued an appeal to their countrymen to join Mr. Gandhi in his fasting and praying. Matters culminated in the arrest of Mr. Gandhi, serious disturbances in Calcutta consequent on the *hartal* following in the wake of his arrest and the declaration of Martial Law in the Punjab.

The Martial law atrocities, the Jallianwalabagh massacres, the heavy sentences on respected popular leaders and the thousand and one indignities that the people of the Punjab suffered in the year 1919 under the regime of Dyer and O'Dwyer echoed and re-echoed from one end of the country to the other. When the people wanted a Royal or Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry, the Viceroy (Lord Chelmsford), in his speech in the Council on 3rd September, proposed a Committee (the Hunter Committee) with Lord Hunter as Chairman and five members of which three were Europeans and in the service of the Government of India. The Viceroy also proposed to introduce a Bill to indemnify the officers who might be responsible for excesses in the administration of the martial law in the Punjab. These proposed measures at once aroused the indignation of the people—the one added insult to injury and the other gave a stone to the people when they asked for bread. The Nationalist Press and leaders all over the country raised a unanimous voice of protest.

The great meeting that was held in this connection at the Town Hall of Calcutta was presided over by Babu Moti Lal Ghose. The enthusiasm of the people that was seen on this occasion recalled the meeting which took place at this very Town Hall for protesting against the Rowlatt Act. Long before the appointed hour the Town Hall was crowded to suffocation and an overflow meeting presided over by Mr. C. R. Das as the deputy of Babu Moti Lal Ghose had to be held at the steps of the Town Hall. Moti Lal was now old and infirm, but he had to respond to the call of the country. It was not possible for him to address the vast gathering. So, on taking the chair he said that as he was in feeble health he would request his young friend Srijut Jitendra Lal Bannerji to read the speech for him. In the overflow meeting Mr. I. B. Sen, Bar-at-Law, read the same speech.

The speech was a strong condemnation of the policy of administration of Lord Chelmsford. With regard to the Viceroy's speech in the Imperial Legislative Council, Babu Moti Lal said :—

“It is admitted that hundreds of people, mostly innocent of all guilt, lost their lives during the recent events ; it is admitted also that hundreds of innocent and respectable people were put to all sorts of indignity and harassment during the same disturbances ; but in the whole of His Excellency's speech there is not one single word of sympathetic reference to the fate of any of these people.”

He criticised the Hunter Committee as consisting of persons who were “in a position of utter dependence upon the Government of India.” With regard to the proposed Indemnity Bill he said :—

“Evidently there is some perturbation in the official mind—some dim and hazy sense that things have been carried too far and with too high a hand and that perhaps the Privy Council may have some nasty things to say about the way in which the Military and other officials of the Punjab services have ridden rough shod over laws, regulations and recognised methods of legal procedure. Otherwise, why should there be this premature talk about the Indemnity Bill? Would it not

have been more seemly and decent to have waited till after the Committee of Enquiry had finished its investigation and submitted its report?"

At this time Turkey was going to be dismembered on the plea of territorial readjustment consequent upon the end of the Great War. She was considered to be an Asiatic power and as such it was thought fit that her possessions in the European continent which had been in her possession for more than 400 years should be converted into a separate and independent territory. But this was not the whole measure of injustice against Turkey. She was to be deprived of her Asiatic possessions also. Syria was to be handed over to France, Armenia was to be entrusted to America and Mesopotamia was to be appropriated to the British Government, Turkey being left confined to the high and arid plateau of Anatolia.

Moti Lal entered a strong protest against this dismemberment of Turkey in his presidential address at the Town Hall. He said :—

"While the world war was going on we heard much about the pious Christian and very virtuous motives with which it was waged. We heard that it was a war to end war and that there was no motive of territorial or military aggrandisement behind it. It seems to me that these cries have grown somewhat faint since the conclusion of peace."

Amongst the other speakers in the meeting were Messrs. B. Chakravarti, C. R. Das, J. Chaudhuri, Jitendralal Bannerjee and Maulavi Akram Khan—all of whom spoke in a similar strain.

In the mean time an article entitled "To Whom Does India Belong?" and another entitled "Arrest of Mr. Gandhi—More Outrages" appeared in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in the second week of April, 1919. The articles contained nothing new or uncommon ; they spoke of things which had been said scores of times before in that paper and stronger language had been used both in the Supreme and Local Councils by Indian Councillors. And yet no action had been taken. But the Government were now in a mood and so they forfeited the sum of Rs. 5000 which the proprietors of the *Amrita Bazar*

(1) *Patrika* had deposited with them under the Indian Press Act of 1910. The Government thought that the articles were "likely and had a tendency directly or indirectly by inference, suggestion, implication or otherwise to bring into hatred the Government established by law in British India and excite disaffection towards the same Government."

The next morning the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* made a great stunt in the field of Indian journalism by keeping its editorial column blank. It, however, gave a note to say that "under the present Press Act we find it impossible to avoid directly or indirectly wounding bureaucratic susceptibilities and at the same time offer honest comments on public events or policies." So, it wrote on "Potatoes" and "Plantains" and thought that this would now be a Model Newspaper in India. The Indian newspaper reading public were taken by surprise and could not resist a laughter even if in the midst of the gloomiest of days.

As a sequel to the forfeiture of the deposit of Rs. 5000, the sum of Rs. 10,000 was demanded as security and deposited with the Government. The subscribers and well-wishers of the *Patrika* contributed this sum in no time thus showing that the paper had been able to earn a corner in their heart by its life-long service.

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## CHAPTER LV

### IN FAILING HEALTH

Dumraon Raj Case—Moti Lal a Witness—Life at Koilwar—At Benares—Attacked with Paralysis—Return to Calcutta—Two Sides of His Character—Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's Impressions—A Consulting Politician—Failing in Health.

About the middle of 1917 the Maharaja Bahadur of Dumraon filed a suit in the Court of the Subordinate Judge of Shahabad against Rai Bahadur Harihar Prasad Singh of Dumraon for the recovery of possession of about 15,000 acres of land situate in Lower Burma and the Dewan House and the gardens and houses in front of the Dewan House at Dumraon. The suit was valued at 30 lacs of rupees. The Maharaja's case was that Rai Bahadur Jai Prakash Lal, father of Rai Bahadur Hari Har Prasad Singh was deputed by Maharaja Sir Radha Prasad Singh, predecessor in interest of the Maharaja to acquire lands in Lower Burma for him (Maharaja Radha Prasad), that the then Dewan Rai Bahadur Jai Prakash Lal took settlement of the lands in Lower Burma in his name, but for the Raj, and similarly the Dewan House and the gardens with houses were acquired, built and furnished with the Raj money. The case created a sensation throughout the district of Shahabad and many other districts in the Provinces of Behar and Bengal. Counsels were taken from the Calcutta High Court by both parties for conducting their cases. The case dragged on for years. Ultimately it went to the Privy Council and was decided there.

In this case Moti Lal was cited by Rai Bahadur Harihar Prasad, commonly known as Hariji, as a witness. Since his taking charge of the editorship of the *Patrika* matters appeared from time to time regarding these properties in that paper. He was required to prove some of these and was examined on commission at his residence at Baghbazar. For about a month he was examined and cross-examined. All this time

he had to do his work in connection with the *Patrika* as usual. Though an old man of over 70 years and not keeping a very good health yet he managed to go through his cross-examination without giving way, and so long he was being examined he kept himself up through sheer strength of mind.

When the case was over he began to feel its after effects and so went for a change of air to Koilwar, a small village on the river Sone in the Shahabad District. He left for Koilwar on the 7th October, 1919, with his family members including the writer of this. There he lived the life of a recluse, as it were, far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife. He took a good many religious and spiritual books with him which he now devoured to his heart's content. But that does not mean that he stopped writing in the *Patrika*. All the important newspapers would be daily read by him and almost daily he would despatch articles or paragraphs for the paper along with his instructions. But at Koilwar life soon became very monotonous for him. For a man who had spent the greater portion of his life in the hurly burly of the political arena of the country it was difficult to live in a place where not even an educated intelligent man could be found to talk with.

After spending a few months at Koilwar Moti Lal along with his family went to Benares and used to live at a house on the bank of the Ganges. From here also he used to write for the *Patrika* and also wrote long letters to those who were then conducting the paper in Calcutta. Though he was now aging yet his spirits were like those of a young man and he still persisted in doing a considerable amount of brain work. The result was that he got an attack of paralysis in the left side of his body. But still he was indefatigable in his energy and would not cease writing. He would regularly send editorial paragraphs and leaders to the *Patrika* office from Benares and these were duly published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. There was no competition amongst newspapers in those days for making the earliest comment and hence there was no difficulty.

## LETTER TO CHAIRMAN OF B. P. CONFERENCE 327

While Moti Lal was at Benares the Bengal Provincial Conference sat at Midnapur in April, 1920. As he could not attend it he wrote a letter to Babu Upendra Nath Maiti, Chairman of the Reception Committee explaining his inability to join the Conference.

Mr. B. K. Lahiri who described Babu Moti Lal Ghose as "the great people's leader and worker" read out the letter in the open conference. It ran thus:—

"Tahirpur Raj House,  
Kedarghat, Benares City,  
*Dated, 31st March, 1920.*

"My dear Upendra Babu,

I deeply regret my inability to attend the Conference as I am lying badly ill at Benares. It is one of the most important sessions of the Bengal Provincial Conference and I would have made it a point to attend if I could. I have, however, no doubt that my friends who will assemble in large numbers will not feel my absence as I am now in the retired list, and more an old fossil than anything else.

Wishing every success to the Conference and God's blessings upon its noble work.

Yours sincerely,  
MOTI LAL GHOSE."

After a few months' stay at Benares Moti Lal returned to Calcutta in the middle of 1920, but unfortunately he could not attend the Session of the All-India Congress which was held in Calcutta in the month of October, 1920 on account of his ill health. But just on the eve of the Congress session Lala Lajput Rai, the President-elect of the Congress paid a visit to him and discussed the political situation with him. It will not in the least be an exaggeration to say that leaders of other provinces in India whenever they came to Bengal did not think their mission complete until and unless they had paid a visit to Moti Lal and ascertained his views on the matter which they had taken up. When Mrs. Besant was elected



President of the Congress in Calcutta she also came to Moti Lal and consulted him as to the topics of the day. Lokamanya Tilak's coming to Calcutta was synonymous with his visit to Moti Lal. Every time the late Maharaja of Durbhanga (Sir Rameswar Singh) came to Calcutta he would invite Moti Lal to see him. I had once to accompany Moti Lal in his old age to the palace of the Maharaja of Durbhanga in Calcutta and was present all through the interview. I expected that they would talk on this or that political subject, but to my utter surprise I found Moti Lal and the Maharaja talking of things of the spirit, of the *Geeta* and the *Mahabharata* and of Sri Krishna. Moti Lal also spoke to the Maharaja about the devotion with which his wife tended him and I could perceive tears of gratitude in his eye.

I was led to think that Moti Lal had two personalities—one his political self through which he was known to the public, and the other his spiritual self, through which he was known only to a few. His love for his country made him a politician, of the earth earthy, constantly criticising the action of the bureaucracy and racking his brain to devise ways and means to foil bureaucratic projects such as the partition of Bengal, partition of Midnapur, opening of a new university at Dacca, attempt to take over the control of the secondary education, imposing cruel taxes on the zemindars and the *raiyats*, extending railways for military purposes, increasing military expenditure, maintenance of a C. I. D., oppression by the Police, neglect of rural water supply and sanitation, passing of repressive laws like the Press Act or the Seditious Meetings Act, increasing the pay of the highly-paid officials, imposing prohibitive duties, carrying on a ruinous excise policy and so forth and so on. The life of a politician is extremely gross and unpoetical. Moti Lal had to live such a life.

But there is, as I have said, another side of his character. It was his spiritual side, where he was actuated by his love of God. When he was prompted by his love of his country he saw that the Bureaucracy was doing a wrong to his country, but from his innermost heart his love of God would prompt

him not to bear ill-will or hatred against the Bureaucracy but to reform it as best as he could. That is the reason why so many officials, from the Viceroy downwards, who ever came in touch with Moti Lal the man, and not Moti Lal the politician, became enamoured of him. Chief Justice Sir Lawrence Jenkins and Lady Jenkins were fast friends of Moti Lal, and I heard from him after they had an interview that they had a talk not on matters political but on spiritual seances. With Lord Ronaldshay also he talked of Hindu philosophy. People who knew him as a politician from a distance were startled when they came in contact with the man. When Mr. Ramsay MacDonald came to pay a visit to Moti Lal in the year 1906 he talked of the "things of the spirit".

Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the present Prime Minister of England, was the London correspondent of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in his earlier days. He was then an ordinary member of the growing Labour Party and had not yet attained his superior position in the British Cabinet. When he came to India in 1905—1906 he paid several visits to Babu Moti Lal Chose and in his book *Awakening of India* he has left an impression of these visits. Writes Mr. Ramsay MacDonald :—

"Another whom I visited in an old crumbling place of many rooms where a joint family dwelt in ancient style began by blessing me in the name of his gods, by telling me about his brother who had withdrawn from the world and who is in sorrow because the plaintive voice of India will intrude upon his meditations, and by informing me about their common family worship. I asked for books and pamphlets published by him, and he brought me the lives of saints and meditations on the Infinite. He told me that he longed to leave the things that are seen and distract, and plunge into that ocean of contemplation where men here seek to find oblivion. He edits one of the most detested Bengal papers."

Again writes Mr. MacDonald :—

"He (Moti Lal) embarked upon an extraordinary account of the worship of Shri Krishna, of whom his family were devotees. His brother had ceased to trouble about the things of life, and this one too longed for the time when he could lay down his pen, hand the paper

over to another, and retire to be alone with his own being. He often took me by the hand as a father does a child and patted me as he told me of the tribulations which beset a man's feet through life, and of the sorrow that waited upon men. As I now write I can hardly resist the belief that in some way he saw the shadow that was then hanging over me. There were tears in his eyes as he spoke of India. Sitting thus at the long table, darkness fell upon us. Yellowish red patches appeared on the walls from the lights outside, and strains of music came in at the windows. We went out together.—“*Awakening of India.*”

Many eminent persons who came in touch with Moti Lal have left their impressions about him to the public ; not all of them have been able to see his inner self as Mr. MacDonald has done. But people did not come to Moti Lal to hear a religious sermon. They came to him for facts and figures, for his help in removing their distress due to oppression or negligence of Government officers, for his views regarding the burning questions of the day.

When due to his old age and infirmity he could not attend any meetings or participate in their deliberations the leaders would often come to his place and he became a “consulting” politician as it were. Mahatma Gandhi, Lala Lajput Rai, Pandit Madan Mohon Malaviya—all, all the leaders would come and see him when he had ceased attending public functions.

Since his return from Benares he had all this time been suffering from partial paralysis of the left side of his body. But though his frame was weak his mind was very strong and he would daily go to the Ganges side morning and evening in his carriage and walk there or sit there in an easy chair for hours together. In the noon he would read books and papers. He took particular interest at this period in Irish affairs and scrutinisingly read the pages of the *Daily Herald*. The books were mostly Vaishnava religious books and books on spiritualism. Gradually, however, his strength began to fail and he was confined to the four corners of his house. His contributions also became few and far between. About the middle of 1921 for a time his health became very bad. He

was ill for some days and in July 1921 commenting on his illness the *Statesman* wrote:—

“The admirers of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, among whom are many Europeans, will learn with great satisfaction that the condition of health of Babu Moti Lal Ghose is gradually improving, though it cannot be said with certainty that he has completely recovered from the attack of paralysis that he recently had. Moti Babu is nearly 75 years of age.”

The *Bengalee* on the 10th July wrote as follows:—

“We are exceedingly relieved to learn that Babu Moti Lal Ghose, who has been lying very seriously ill of late, is now out of danger. Babu Moti Lal Ghose is one of the most enterprising and brilliant journalist we have in Bengal, and his achievements and services would fill up a golden page in the history of Young Bengal. A man like Moti Babu would do honour to the journalism of any country, and Bengal can hardly afford to lose at the present moment the services of such a distinguished representative of the Press. We wish Babu Moti Lal Ghose a complete and speedy recovery and still many years of patriotic service.”

Moti Lal was again progressing favourably after being confined to bed for some time.

In August, 1921 at his instance some extracts from his private diary in connection with the case of the Maharaja of Kashmir and his interview with the late Charles Bradlaugh were published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. His *Reminiscences* regarding the advent of Malaria in Bengal during the sixties and seventies of the last century had also appeared in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* a few months back. These were very much appreciated by those who read them. Even the *Statesman* between whom and the *Patrika* no love was lost remarked:—

“The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* often publishes powerful passages from the diary of Babu Moti Lal Ghose. Some of these are very interesting reading both to Europeans and Indians. Moti Babu is now old and often very ill. Systematic publication of the reminiscences of a journalist and public man like Moti Babu would be both profitable and interesting reading to many. Cannot this be done?”

Latterly he made up his mind to contribute two signed articles every week in the columns of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*,

but was not able to carry out his plan. He had contributed only two articles when he fell seriously ill. The first article was on *How Shankaracharyya Learnt Wisdom* and the second was on *Indian and European Yoga*, published on the 11th and 15th June, 1922 respectively. The article on Yoga was practically his last article in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* though by no means his last contribution. But of that later.

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## CHAPTER LVI

### RIVALS IN A GOOD CAUSE

Moti Lal and Surendra Nath—Their Views Compared—An Interview at Simultala—Their Personal Relations—Comments in Their Papers.

The name of Surendra Nath Banerjea is often associated with that of Moti Lal Ghose. Surendra Nath was perhaps the only man in Bengal who could at one time share equal popularity with Moti Lal. Both were journalists and at one time the papers which they edited—the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and the *Bengalee*—vied with each other in doing service to their country, each in its own way. Though in later life they went towards diametrically opposite directions they were fast friends and co-workers in their younger days. It is not known at what time they first came in touch with each other. We find that when Surendra Nath was forced to resign from the Indian Civil Service in the year 1873 several paragraphs were written from day to day in the *Patrika* championing his cause. They must have come in touch with each other at that time. But later when Surendra Nath entered the field of politics differences grew up between these two stalwarts—probably due to a feeling of rivalry. There gradually grew up a sharp difference of opinion between them, which later became as poles asunder. Often they fell foul of each other in their papers, but often again they complimented each other through their papers as well as in public meetings. Their

alternate fightings and peace-makings were a source of great amusement to young and old alike—being leaders of Bengal they were the cynosure of all eyes and their utterances and writings about each other were carefully watched by the people. While Moti Lal excelled in the press, Surendra Nath's *forte* was the platform. So, when the press and the platform were wrestling and embracing each other by turns it was a sight for the gods to see.

Surendra Nath had early associated himself with the Congress. But the policy which gradually came to be advocated by the Congress, viz., a policy of representation, petition and deputation, was not always approved by Moti Lal who was a very strong and unsparing critic of the Government as well as of the leaders who managed the Congress at that time in the name of the people of India and who declared that their views were the views of the people. Hence, though a hearty supporter of the Congress in its infancy Moti Lal was during its period of adolescence strongly opposed to it, and that is one of the reasons why he as well as Tilak were never selected as President of the Congress. Like many other politicians he did not lend his support to the party in power, but he always stuck to his own gun though by doing so he found himself in the minority amongst the then conductors of the Congress. His views were always in advance of the Congress of those days and the *Englishman* of Sept. 6, 1922, rightly observes that it is not an exaggeration to say that "modern Indian nationalism, except in so far as it has quite recently been overlaid by ideas originating from Ahmedabad, has been entirely moulded by Mr. Ghose." Moti Lal had a very wide political outlook and he had attained the high water mark of his genius and was the supreme leader of political ideas in Bengal at a time when it was remarked that "what Bengal thinks to-day, the whole of India thinks to-morrow."

In this connection the *Englishman* also wrote that the spirit which pervaded Moti Lal was "of course hostile to the British Government and indirectly hostile to all Europeans."

But this is giving a wrong interpretation to Moti Lal's character. If whatever is good for India is bad for the British, then certainly Moti Lal's policy was hostile to the British, for Moti Lal aimed at nothing but the good of India. But if there could be any good to India without its necessarily being bad to Britain then certainly Moti Lal was not hostile to Britain ; for, as I have already said, Moti Lal aimed at the good of India and nothing but the good of India. He dedicated himself to his country ; and the country's cause was the dearest to him. If his country's cause was hostile to British interests he was hostile to British interests and if his country's cause was not hostile to British interests he too was not hostile to British interests. And there he differed from the Congress of the middle period. Its conductors were too punctilious to offend the sentiments of the Government. But Moti Lal did not care for that. In this respect he and Lokamanya Tilak sailed in the same boat. If they thought that something said or done by them would be of some good to their country but might displease the powers that be they never refrained from saying or doing that.

Surendra Nath was not above his comrades in the Congress camp in this respect and the susceptibility towards offending Government which the advanced section of Indian politicians latterly found in him was in an embryonic state in him even when he was an out and out Congressman. However, Moti Lal and Surendra Nath would often meet and discuss political situations. I remember an incident in this connection. Surendra Nath and Moti Lal, both were on a change of air at Simultala some time after the historical Barisal conference of 1906 which was unhappily broken off by the Magistrate. They were discussing what attitude they would take at the Indian National Congress to be held at Surat and in course of conversation Surendra Nath said, "Well Moti Babu, believe me. I promise to you I will ever stand by you in case of difference amongst the leaders." Later history, however, shows that unfortunately Surendra Nath did not speak like a prophet on this occasion.

When the above incident took place I was a boy of ten summers only and though nearly three decades have since gone by I vividly remember the interview between Moti Lal and Surendra Nath at Simultala. I had heard of Surendra Nath before. Moti Lal would very often talk about Surendra Nath and criticise his actions. Even while talking to the ladies and other members of the family he would cut jokes about Surendra Nath and both the ladies and he would enjoy these very much. I was anxious to see Surendra Nath. So, when he came to the place where Moti Lal was living with his family, his tall and stalwart figure, his semi-European dress, his flowing beard, his smart appearance, his thick walking stick and above all his resonant voice and his loud and hearty laughter deeply impressed us. I still find his words ringing in my ears. Every now and then he spoke in English ; but his words in Bengali which, I think, I can still remember were :—"Well, Moti Babu, let anybody say or do anything, I shall never quarrel with you—I shall always stand by you." Subsequently Moti Lal narrated this incident to many of his friends and felt very much delighted when doing so.

Moti Lal, I am constrained to say, had all along a feeling of rivalry for Surendra Nath. He was a great admirer of Surendra Nath's memory and power of public speaking. On numerous occasions he narrated with genuine admiration how Surendra Nath as President of the Congress at Poona had delivered his long address *ex tempore* without looking into the printed copy of the speech. Though Moti Lal possessed a very good memory yet I have often heard him saying : "Oh, if I could only have a memory like Surendra Nath." Again, he would some times say, "If I had only the sonorous voice of Surendra Nath and could speak like him in public." Moti Lal admitted Surendra Nath's superiority as a public speaker, "but it is all foam and froth," he said. But he did not admit that Surendra Nath was superior or even equal to him so far as writing was concerned. He believed that his editorials in the *Patrika* were far superior to those of Surendra Nath's in the *Bengalee*.



Many men would often come to Moti Lal and make derogatory remarks against Surendra Nath. I cannot say that this did not please him. Regarding the relationship between them the late poet Nabin Chandra Sen has told a nice story in his "Autobiography." In order to curry favour with Surendra Nath the very same men who came to Moti Lal and spoke ill of Surendra Nath would go to the latter and speak ill of Moti Lal. Here also I cannot say that this did not please Surendra Nath. I have heard from a venerable old gentleman who was closely associated with Surendra Nath for many years that he used to say that "Moti Babu is a good man, but it is his *chelas* and *chamundas* (followers and adherents) who are spoiling him." Great men have their little weaknesses ; Moti Lal and Surendra Nath were weaknesses to each other.

Though Moti Lal and Surendra Nath criticised each other in their respective papers they would behave very friendly when they met either in public or privately. In the year 1908 the Bengal Provincial Conference was held at Pabna. In the Subjects Committee meeting it was proposed to form a Committee composed of Babus Rabindra Nath Tagore, Surendra Nath Banerjea, Moti Lal Ghose, Jogesh Chaudhury and Hirendra Nath Datta to give effect to a resolution for raising money for the improvement of sanitation, agriculture, etc. Surendra Nath declined to serve on the Committee. Though he did not express his reasons, Moti Lal understood them and declared that he would not work in any Committee without Surendra Nath. He made a strong appeal to him that they should sink all private differences and act in concert. On hearing this appeal Surendra Nath heartily reciprocated and this happy result was received with loud and prolonged cheers.

Though in private life they did not speak very highly of each other in numerous public meetings they paid great compliments to each other. For example on one occasion while proposing Surendra Nath as the Chairman of a certain meeting Moti Lal said that Surendra Nath was self-luminous like the sun and did not require to be introduced. On another occasion

when Surendra Nath presided over a meeting at the Town Hall in Calcutta, during the Home Rule agitation days, protesting against the arrest and detention of Mrs. Besant and Messrs. Arundale and Wadia, Moti Lal proposed a vote of thanks to the Chair and in doing so he said that thanking a gentleman for his services to the country was a formalism introduced into this country by the West; the Orientals showed their gratitude by embracing and kissing and he wanted to do the same with regard to Surendra Nath. As a matter of fact Surendra Nath stood up from his chair and Moti Lal hugged him and kissed him on the dais of the Town Hall before a packed house. Next morning the vernacular daily *Nayak*, then edited by the famous humourist Panch Cowrie Banerjee came out with a cartoon, representing Surendra Nath as Sri Krishna and Moti Lal as Srimati Radha going to embrace each other. For days together this incident became the talk of the day among the elite of Calcutta.

The wit-sallies and repartees that passed between Babu Moti Lal Ghose, editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee, editor of the *Bengalee* in the columns of their respective papers are ever-memorable. The following is taken at random from the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of January 13, 1914:—

“The reader is aware that we had the misfortune to object to the Press Act Resolution of the Hon’ble Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee. Our brother thus seeks to take his revenge on us through his paper the *Bengalee*:—

‘We find that a note of protest has been raised by the *Patrika* with regard to Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee’s resolution on the Press Act. The Resolution has been declared useless and mischievous, and even the Resolution on the educational policy of the Government has been characterised as being more useful to the Government than to the people. We are informed Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee did not consult Babu Moti Lal Ghose in framing either of the Resolutions. If that be the head and front of his offence, we do not think the public will seriously trouble themselves about the matter.’

“That is the old *mamoolie* grievance of the *Bengalee*. Because Babu Moti Lal does not love Babu Surendra

Nath, therefore the *Patrika* abuses the latter! Is that a fact? Does Babu Surendra Nath believe it? It is unworthy of him if he nourishes such a petty idea in his mind. Our brother says that the reason why the *Patrika* has come down on him is that he did not consult Babu Moti Lal about his two Resolutions. But he also did not take him into confidence when he moved his Resolution on Bengal dacoities in the Bengal Council. And yet the *Patrika* paid him high compliments for the splendid speech he made on that occasion. So, you see, consulting or no consulting Babu Moti Lal has nothing to do with the *Patrika's* protest against Babu Surendra Nath's public acts. And may we inquire—what was the harm if Babu Surendra Nath had consulted Babu Moti Lal in the matter of his Press Act Resolution? Surely, his hard-won *Honourable* now added to his name, would not have in that case dropped down."

Throughout their lives Moti Lal and Surendra Nath thus wrote about each other in their respective papers.

I cannot conclude this chapter without narrating a very funny incident. One of the persons who often came to Moti Lal and spoke to him about Surendra Nath was the editor of a number of volumes giving the histories of well-known families in Bengal. One day a few years before the death of Moti Lal when he was severely criticising Surendra Nath for accepting a Ministry with Rs. 64,000 a year in place of a life of self-sacrifice and service to the country this gentleman was talking with him and in course of conversation he said, "Surendra Babu has asked me to carry a message to you—he has said, what are you writing in the *Patrika*? You have got dotage (*apanake bahattare dharechey*—Bengali)." Moti Lal was very much pleased and said with a smile, "Good, good, carry my message back to him. Tell him that as regards dotage, he has also got it. But there is this difference—I can understand and admit that I have got it, whereas he cannot understand and so does not admit that he has got it." I was present when this conversation took place. Needless to say we laughed a hearty laugh. I do not know if the message was at all carried to Surendra Nath or what reply he gave.

## CHAPTER LVII

### MOTI LAL AND GANDHI

Moti Lal on Gandhi—Meetings Between Moti Lal and Gandhi—Some Topics of Conversation—The Last Interview.

Moti Lal and Mahatma Gandhi were not very familiar with each other. The reason for this is that during the major portion of their lives they belonged to two different schools of politics. Mr. Gandhi belonged to the school of "Moderates" and was with Pheroze Shah Mehta and Gokhale, whereas Moti Lal belonged to the "Extremist" school and was with Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak. But Mr. Gandhi was seldom, if ever, criticised in the columns of the *Patrika*; on the contrary, his great services in South Africa were highly appreciated by the *Patrika*.

On their way to Rangoon while on a tour in March, 1915 Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi stopped for a few days at the house of Babu Bhupendra Nath Basu. They were given a magnificent reception by the Calcutta public. On Saturday the 13th March, a public demonstration was held on the grounds of the palace of Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nandy of Cossimbazar. Almost all the elite of the different sections of the Indian community were present to accord a hearty reception to the honoured guests. A spacious *shamiana* was erected for the purpose and the place was packed to its utmost capacity. On the motion of Babu Bhupendra Nath Basu, Babu Moti Lal Ghose was voted to the chair. Moti Lal in welcoming the honoured guest of the evening said:—

"My dear and beloved friend, I accord you, not on my own behalf alone, but on behalf of the whole of Bengal our heartiest welcome. The greeting comes from the very bottom of my heart. You are not aware how dear, how loved, how esteemed and how respected you are. Why so? Do you know my friend? Because, your sacrifice is of a unique kind. We people talk of sacrifice. But you have not preached self-sacrifice

in mere words, but have shown it by your example, by your noble deeds. . . . There are people who call you a *political sanyasi*. These two terms do not agree. They differ as mongoose and serpent. There is not much of sublime spiritualism in politics. Spiritualise yourself. You have done it to a certain extent. But spiritualise yourself more and spiritualise humanity. Let that be your real mission. You are the fittest person for that. You know we are proud of our *Avatar* Sri Gouranga. His was the spirit of love to mankind. May you be saturated with that celestial spirit which filled the heart of Gouranga. May you preach that love. May you live long and end your days by working for the people so as to be able to turn them to the fountain of all blessings. May you be blessed both in earth and in heaven. May God's choicest blessings be showered upon you. May you long perform your mission, the mission to serve God and man."

The Hon'ble Mr. Byomkesh Chakravarti who followed Moti Lal humorously referred to the frail and fragile figures of Moti Lal and Gandhi. "In their President (Moti Lal)," he said, "he did not see a hero physically. In their honoured guest (Mr. Gandhi) also he did not see a great hero physically. But there was such a thing as heroism free from bloodshed, heroism that did not inflict death on others."

After the speech of Mr. D. P. Khaitan and the Hon'ble Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjea, Mr. Gandhi gave a reply. He said :—

"Mr. Chairman and friends, I do not know in what terms to return my thanks to you for giving me such a hearty welcome. You President, Sir, have blessed me and have entrusted a charge to me also. I hope I shall have deserved your blessing and I shall have power enough and willingness enough to carry out the charge you have entrusted."

There were several meetings between Mahatma Gandhi and Babu Moti Lal. I give below accounts of some of them.

Some time after the death of Mr. Gokhale, Mr. Gandhi paid a visit to Babu Moti Lal Ghose. Mr. Gandhi was then observing mourning on account of the death of Mr. Gokhale, whom he considered as his political 'guru'. He had come to the *Patrika* office before this ; but this was the first time that

I saw him there. I still remember the figure of Mr. Gandhi, bare-footed, with a small coarse cloth to cover the lower part of his body and a most ordinary blanket to cover the upper part. His head was almost bald and his moustache was clean shaved. It was early in the morning and he talked with Moti Lal for more than half an hour. They talked mostly about the late Mr. Gokhale. I came to learn from their conversation that Mr. Gandhi was now living only upon fruits and milk.

An interview took place between Moti Lal and Mahatma Gandhi at the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* office on the 10th September, 1920. Mahatma Gandhi was accompanied by Srijuts Jawahar Lal Nehru, Giridhari Lal and Srimati Sarala Devi. When Mahatma Gandhi asked him as to his views on Council entry Moti Lal said :—

“I have been a non-co-operationist, for the last fifty years. As regards the Councils I have always regarded them as a farce, a delusion and a snare. I myself have never sought to enter any of them and have always counselled our public men not to enter them.”

Moti Lal then said that it mattered little whether a handful of title-holders gave up their titles or not, it was similarly of little importance whether some men joined the Councils or not. The question of questions was how to rouse the masses. A combination like that of the Indian indigo cultivators in the sixties of the last century, he said, was now necessary. Moti Lal then narrated how the *raiya*ts brought about their own deliverance. Said he :—

“It happened in this wise, the *raiya*ts were groaning under the oppression of the planters. They came to see that their deliverance lay in not sowing indigo. So, a few intelligent people among them took a vow in some sacred temple that they would not sow indigo any more. Then they persuaded others to take the same vow. The cry was ‘no *raiya*t should touch the indigo even if he was tortured to death.’ And though they were tortured in a most brutal way by the planters they did not yield. When the planters failed the authorities interfered and coerced them both by threats and entreaties. They remained firm and said, ‘Shaheb, you say you will put us in jail. Do it, but this hand shall never again touch indigo.’ ‘Sow it,’ they said, ‘for this

season only and you will be free to do what you like afterwards.' 'Shaheb, we have taken the vow in the name of God. We can never break it.'—that was the bold and spirited reply of the down-trodden and illiterate *raiya*s. In this way six millions of people were united in course of six months and they achieved success in a way which has no parallel in history."

Moti Lal then referred to the cry of "land" raised by Parnell which brought about unity among Irishmen and then said :—

"Dear friend, you should think of a common cry for the masses which will appeal to their heart directly. It seems to me there are two things which sit like a dread night-mare on the breast of both the masses and the educated class. One is the Police *Zooloom* and the other is the pitiless character of the criminal administration. Can't these go to make a common cry?"

Mahatma Gandhi said that he would think over the matter. They then exchanged their views regarding boycott of law courts, schools and colleges, etc.

Since, Mahatma Gandhi has tried with the cry of "Salt Tax" and has now been experimenting with the cry of "Harijan". Time will show the result achieved. So far, our country, I am afraid, has not been able to find out a common cry on the basis of which all our countrymen may unite.

Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Mahomed Ali while on their tour through important places in India arrived at Calcutta from Patna on Wednesday the 17th August, 1921. They were on their way to Assam. They put up at the house of Sriji C. R. Das who was unfortunately away at Arrah in connection with the Dumraon Raj Case. The Mahatma and the Maulana paid a visit to Babu Moti Lal Ghose at the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* office. Moti Lal was now ailing. His left hand had been partially paralysed and though not confined to bed he could walk only with a stick. So they had a short conversation with Moti Lal, who addressed them like his sons and invoked the blessings of God upon them and wished success to the great work of nation-building which they had taken in hand. He expressed his regret that he might not live till the completion of their great work as he might pass away any

moment owing to his living under the grip of a dangerous and treacherous disease. All the same he hoped that if he were really taken to the other side of the world he would not forget India and her liberators and be happy at the freedom of his dear and beloved Motherland.

Moti Lal took this opportunity to warn them that they must prevent all dissensions among the Nationalist party. He said that already there was a rumour of a threatened schism among the Nationalists in consequence of the alleged autocracy of some of the leaders. The Mahatma, he said, was the only person who could prevent such a rupture by nipping it in the bud by the sheer force of his personality, his intense patriotism and his wonderful tact.

When Moti Lal said that it would not matter much if he were to depart from this world now, but that it was essential that Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Mahomed Ali should have a long life to fulfil the great task which had been imposed upon them by Providence they said in reply that they could not afford to lose Moti Babu at such a critical moment when Swaraj was within sight. The Maulana further said that his mother was as old and weak as Moti Babu, but she always said that she would not die till Swaraj was attained. The same sentiment, said he, should infuse Babu Moti Lal who should, like his mother, ask the angel of death not to approach him so long as India's freedom was not achieved.

The ladies of Moti Lal's house greeted the illustrious visitors by blowing conch shells when they arrived. Scores of people who had assembled on the ground floor of the house cried "Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai," "Maulana Mahomed Ali Ki Jai," when they left the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* Office.

On his way back from Assam Mahatma Gandhi came to the *Patrika* Office again on Sunday the 11th September 1921. I was present on this occasion also. I quote the following from my private diary written at that time and also published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* on a subsequent date.

On Sunday the 11th September, 1921, at about 3 P.M. Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Mahomed Ali paid a visit to



Babu Moti Lal Ghose, the editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, at the residence of the latter at Baghbazar. A cinema photographer had somehow or other got scent of the fact that the Mahatma was coming and was seen adjusting his camera before the building at about 2-30 P.M.

As soon as the motor car carrying the great personages stopped before the house some young members of the family who had been eagerly awaiting their arrival ran towards it and took the dust of their feet on their head as they were getting down. They then conducted their honoured guests to a verandah on the first floor of the building where Babu Moti Lal was reclining on his arm chair. Some members of the staff and some outsiders who had by this time assembled there now cried aloud, "Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai," "Maulana Mahomed Ali Ki Jai."

The *Patrika* Office is a place where you will always find perfect democracy—there is little distinction here between the employer and the employee and sometimes you will find great difficulty in making out who is who.\* Throughout the day all sorts of persons are coming to the Office and a hearty reception is given to all of them irrespective of caste or creed. Internees, as well as those who have interned them (that is the Police or the C.I.D.) find equal access to Babu Moti Lal and he always lends a hearing to all of them. Had not a gentleman belonging to the party of Mahatma Gandhi given instructions to a member of the staff not to allow outsiders to enter the editorial room, they would have most probably flocked there. Fortunately the enthusiastic crowd listened to the request not to go upstairs and waited patiently at the spacious courtyard of the building to have a *darshan* of the Mahatma.

Though Moti Lal had lately been suffering from an attack of vertigo he was keeping sound health at the time. Besides whenever one talked politics with him he would at once become as energetic as a youngman of twenty. He would speak with a positive tone and if you did not agree with him he would not

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\* This was written in 1921. Things have changed since then.

rest satisfied till you were convinced. A man had to be courageous enough to contradict him before his face, for he was master of his facts and had a keen logical head. No amount of falacies would appeal to him. So I was surprised to hear Moti Lal admit when there was some difference between Mahatma Gandhi and himself that the argument was in favour of the Mahatma.

Moti Lal had some questions to put to the Mahatma and these he had jotted down on a piece of paper. He talked with the Mahatma on these points for about an hour.

The Mahatma had come, it appeared to me, to convince Babu Moti Lal of the necessity of the non-co-operation and Swaraj movement. He requested Moti Lal to write some articles in his paper supporting the movement and not opposing it. The Mahatma said that he was not sure that he would get Swaraj within a particular date, but he was sure that if they failed to get Swaraj within that date they must not stop, they must still be continuing the agitation. He said that he was sure that the actions which had been taken in connection with the movement by himself and his party were always justified and that had they not done so they would not probably have achieved the amount of success they had already got.

The Mahatma requested Babu Moti Lal to write some articles in his inimitable way, eulogising the *Charka*, which, insisted the Mahatma, was an absolute necessity for the attainment of Swaraj. "I want you," he said, "to raise a sharp shrill cry in your paper that will go deep down into the hearts of the people."

After their conversation was over they were garlanded by two little boys of the family and the ladies blew conch-shells.

By this time the crowd in the courtyard had grown bigger and when the Mahatma and the Maulana came down there was a great rush among the people to take the dust of their feet. They were photographed when getting into the motor car.

This was the last meeting between Mahatma Gandhi and Babu Moti Lal.

In a conference of Bengal delegates held at Ahmedabad on the 29th December, 1921 during the session of the Congress, there Mahatma Gandhi addressed the Bengal delegates on the political situation and the task before them. He explained his doctrine of Non-co-operation. While speaking about the duty of the lawyers he referred to his interview with Babu Moti Lal and said :—

“I wish I could reproduce the conversation I had with Moti Babu. Of course I cannot describe to you in detail the conversation I had with him when I visited him in Calcutta last about lawyers and how he urged with me not to be harsh upon them. I know I have said many unpleasant things that could be proved and that were proper, and that too in no uncharitable spirit and certainly not with a view to estrange them from us. I was anxious that they should be dislodged from their leadership or sole leadership which they possessed. But there never was the slightest intention that they should be branded out of public service. On the contrary I endeavoured to harness every lawyer—even practising lawyer—with national service, because if he cannot fulfil the conditions, he cannot very well work officially in Non-co-operation Committees, etc., etc.”

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## CHAPTER LVIII

### BOYCOTT AND NON-CO-OPERATION

Prince of Wales' Visit to India—Meetings For and Against Reception—Moti Lal's Interview With King George V Recalled—Moti Lal on Council Entry.

In a previous chapter I have described the interview that Moti Lal had with King George V when the latter came to India as the Prince of Wales in 1906. When the present Prince of Wales (Prince Albert) visited India in 1921 a Reception Committee was formed to give him a hearty welcome. A meeting of the citizens of Calcutta was held in the Dalhousie Institute on Wednesday the 24th August with a view to arrange the preliminaries in connection with the reception to be accorded to the Prince of Wales. The meeting was called in the name

of the public and the Governor of Bengal (Lord Ronaldshay) was to have presided.

Those were the days of Non-co-operation and Boycott. The Jallianwalla Bagh outrages were still fresh in the minds of the people, the sore due to the Khilafat wrong had not yet healed up, the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms had failed to satisfy even the most moderate-minded men among the advanced section of the politicians ; and the Congress and the Khilafat Committees had been advocating the boycott of schools, colleges, foreign goods and even social relations with the rulers. Naturally, therefore, the Congress and the Khilafat Committees decided that the Indian public should have nothing to do with the Prince of Wales' visit to India. All functions in that connection were thus to be boycotted.

So when the Dalhousie Institute meeting was called in the name of the public Congress and Khilafat leaders thought it their duty to oppose it and they mustered strong at the meeting with their followers under the lead of Mr. C. R. Das. Dr. Sasanka Jiban Ray, M.A., D.L., Advocate, Calcutta High Court moved the following resolution which was carried unanimously :—

“That in view of the resolution passed by the All-India Congress Committee this meeting of the citizens of Calcutta as convened by the Sheriff of Calcutta resolves that no reception should be accorded to the Prince of Wales on the occasion of his visit here.”

The original organisers of the meeting did not at all turn up at the Dalhousie Institute, but suddenly and secretly changed their venue at the eleventh hour and met at the Town Hall under the chairmanship of the Governor (Lord Ronaldshay) with a strong police guard. In that meeting Sir Lancelot Sanderson, Chief Justice of Bengal, than whom a better representative of the people of Bengal could not be found, moved the following resolution :—

“That an enthusiastic and loyal reception be accorded to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales by all sections of the community both European and Indian on the occasion of his approaching visit to Calcutta.”

Sir Surendra Nath Banerjea, newly-appointed Minister of the Bengal Legislative Council was one of the speakers and when he rose to speak he was greeted with thunderous cries of "shame, shame." With his fist aimed at the audience Sir Surendra Nath thundered forth in return :—

"It is a matter of unutterable shame on the part of the *howling crowd* to call out 'shame' when we are organising a demonstration of welcome in honour of our Royal guest."

A General Committee and an Executive Committee were formed with a view to arrange for a reception of the Prince and the meeting broke up before the fixed time.

Now Moti Lal's name was inadvertently included in one of these Committees. This made several gentlemen inquire of him as to whether he had joined the Reception Committee, and if so, then why.

The following reply was published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* :—

"We have received a number of letters inquiring if Babu Moti Lal Ghose has joined the Prince of Wales Reception Committee. In reply we have to say that he was nominated a member without his knowledge or permission. He has written to the Secretaries to the Committee expressing his inability to serve on it."

*A. B. Patrika*, 8/9/21.

Now, like all mortal beings even Moti Lal had his detractors and this explanation offered a weapon to their hands. At least two of the Moderate papers of Calcutta, viz., the *Bengalee* and the *Sanjibani* adversely commented on this conduct of Moti Lal and said that he behaved otherwise when King George V came to India as Prince of Wales in January, 1906. The *Bengalee* wrote that on that occasion he "measured his full length on the ground." The *Sanjibani* said that he went to the length of licking the feet of His Royal Highness. Now this was a vile exaggeration. To meet the charge brought against Moti Lal an article was published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* giving the correct version of the interview between Moti

Lal and King George V as Prince of Wales and the following editorial note was published :—

“We would not have noticed these utterly false and malicious statements (of the *Bengalee* and the *Sanjibanee*), which presumably were manufactured by the editors of the two Moderate papers, evidently with the object of lowering Babu Moti Lal in the estimation of the public, if the writers of some of the letters to us had not been men of light and leading. As we have said above the statements are absolutely false. What happened at the interview was described by Babu Moti Lal himself in the *Patrika* in an article, which is republished in another column. We have no doubt it will be read with interest at this distance of time by a large number of our countrymen. One will see that what Moti Babu did was this ; instead of shaking the hand of the Prince of Wales when he offered it to him, he went on his knees in the oriental fashion and requested His Royal Highness to remove a plague spot from the British Administration of India, which was a fruitful source of seething discontent in this country. The Prince far from being embarrassed by the attitude of Babu Moti Lal Ghose as the *Bengalee* says, seemed to be deeply impressed and gave Babu Moti Lal the promise that he would speak the matter to his father and he did redeem his promise. As a matter of fact as soon as he returned to England, he in his Guild Hall speech, pleaded strongly for wider sympathy on the part of the Indian officials towards the people of India. Lord Morley communicated the message of the Prince of Wales to the Government of India, but as usual it was shelved in the Secretariat, though it came practically from the late King Emperor himself. If Babu Moti Lal knelt before the future Emperor of India, did he do it to serve himself or the country? Surely he did not do it to secure for himself a Knighthood or a Ministership carrying Rs. 64,000 per annum, like some of our public men, after casting all his life-long principles to the dogs and stabbing the country in its vital part.”

I think this reply also stabbed his critics in the vital part.

One of the foremost questions that agitated the minds of the Indian leaders after the imprisonment of Mahatma Gandhi, Deshbandhu C. R. Das and other leaders of the Non-co-operation movement in the last decade was the question whether Nationalists should go into the Legislative Councils or boycott them altogether. While Mahatma Gandhi was of opinion that

the Indian Assembly and the Provincial Councils should be altogether boycotted there were others, chief among whom were Deshabandhu C. R. Das and Pandit Moti Lal Nehru, who were of opinion that the Assembly and the Councils should be entered, not with a view to co-operating with the Government but with a view to opposing and obstructing the Government at every step. Deshabandhu was now in jail and as a matter of fact Mrs. Das who echoed his views suggested the capturing of the Councils in her speech as President of the Bengal Provincial Conference at Chittagong. A split was threatened every moment between the followers of Mahatma Gandhi and Deshabandhu C. R. Das. It was at this time that Srijuts V. J. Patel, then General Secretary to the Indian National Congress and T. Prakasam saw Babu Moti Lal Ghose at the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* office. In this connection the following account from the *Swarjya* of Madras will prove interesting :—

A correspondent wired to that paper under date 24th April, 1922 :—

“Sjts. V. J. Patel and T. Prakasam visited Babu Moti Lal Ghose, Proprietor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* at 3 P.M. yesterday in his house in Calcutta. Moti Babu has been lying in bed for over six months in a very weak state. Sjt. Patel told Moti Babu that they had come merely for *darshan* and that he should not attempt to speak in that weak condition.

“Moti Babu answered :—‘There is only one point on which I wish to talk. I have always been against entering the new Councils. When Mahatma Gandhi saw me last year (you were present then) I told him that anyone who goes to the Council is likely to be affected with the insidious poison that is there. There are unfortunately some in our own camp who favour the entry. There should be no split in the camp.’

“Sjt. Patel answered : ‘It is no use talking about this matter now when we have sent twenty five thousand patriots including women to jail. We shall do our best to see that there is no split. The question if raised will be settled at the next Congress in December.’

“Moti Babu was considerably touched when reference was made to the sacrifice of leaders and other patriots. With tears in his eyes he looked up and said :—‘I never thought I would live to see such sacrifice and unity in our country. I am glad I am alive to see this.’

"Sjt. Patel answered that Srijut Prakasam had said the same thing in his speech the day before.

"Thinking that they might have already tired him Sjts. Patel and Prakasam got up to take leave, but Babu Moti Lal said: 'Sit, sit. You may not see me again. I am anxious to go to the other side. I am dying. I don't know if I could be of any service to you from there. God will bless you and our country if all this sacrifice means anything in His eyes.'

"After a short conversation about the progress of the *Swarajya*, about the starting of which his valuable advice had been taken by Sjt. Prakasam six months ago, they both took leave of the grand old leader of the country.

"Throughout the conversation he refused to recline on his bed though repeatedly requested to do so. Sitting tight on his bed and talking in a low and feeble voice he spoke like one inspired."

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## CHAPTER LIX

### THE LAST PHASE

Attacked by Paralysis—Gradual Decline in Health—Last Articles on *Mohamudgara Slokas* and *Yoga*—Moti Lal's Last Letter to the Press—His Faith in God and Spiritualism.

When Sjts. V. J. Patel and T. Prakasam met Moti Lal in April, 1922, at his residence in Calcutta, he was ill, very ill, but not actually laid up in bed for any length of time. Since his partial paralysis of the left side he had never been completely cured of it, but there had been some improvement due partly to the application of some oils supplied by Kaviraj Ram Chandra Mallik, who treated him for long, and partly to his own strength of mind.

In spite of his left side being partly paralysed he used to go to the Ganges side on his horse and carriage and walk on the bank of the Ganges between Cossipur Steamer Ghat and the Hanging Bridge on the Maharatta Ditch almost every morning and evening. He would walk on his stick and would



resent any assistance given to him. If we wanted to catch hold of his arm when he was walking he would resist it and would not allow us to do so. I slept in the same room with him in a separate cot. I noticed that when he wanted to go to the verandah at night he got down from the cot and would crawl a distance of ten or eleven cubits. If I wanted to assist him he would chide me and ask me to go to bed.

In spite of his ill health he kept himself in touch with current affairs. We accompanied him in his morning walk. A deck-chair used to be carried along with us in the carriage and when he had finished walking the deck-chair was placed on the road-side or on a jetty where he used to sit for hours together and we had to read aloud the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* from cover to cover. At noon also he would sometimes write articles or paragraphs for the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* whenever he liked to do so or would read books on spiritualism, dealing with the other world and the life beyond.

When he could not go to the Ganges side he would walk on the verandah of his house for hours together with his stick in his hand. He had his second attack of paralysis when enjoying one such walk. He suddenly fell on the ground with a quivering immediately behind the chair where he used to sit, and became unconscious. Doctor Bepin Bihari Ghose, a renowned medical practitioner of the locality, was called in. He was still lying unconscious. The doctor cried aloud in his ear "Moti Babu, Moti Babu," for some time. At first he did not speak, but after some time he spoke something indistinctly. The doctor thought he was saying—"ভয় করছে :—I am feeling afraid" and said :—"ভয় করছে ? ভয় কি ?—You are feeling afraid—there is no cause of fear." At this Moti Babu smiled a little and said without opening his eyes and in a very low and feeble voice—"আমি ভয় করছে বলিনি, আমি বলেছি আমার ভাটিগো হয়েছে—I did not say that I was afraid ; I said I have got Vertigo." He snapped his fingers and added, "ভয় করবে কেন ? মরবার ভয় ?—আমি মরবার ভয় করি না—Why should I be afraid ? Afraid of Death ? I am not afraid of death." And he snapped his fingers again as if at Death.

He was laid up in bed for some days after this, but he came round again and showed a decided improvement and took to work whenever he liked it. Of course he could not write the articles or paragraphs himself, but had to dictate them to an amanuensis.

In the month of June, 1922, there was much improvement in the condition of the health of Babu Moti Lal Ghose. As a matter of fact not only we, laymen, but even doctors were surprised to find that he could now partially move the fingers of his left hand and partially close the palm, which were stiffened before due to paralysis. He had not written for the *Patrika* for some time. But writing for the paper was a passion with him, it was his life's main or sole occupation ; he could give up everything else, but writing for his paper he could not. So, though seriously ill and almost confined to bed he expressed his desire to contribute articles on diverse subjects to the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* every week. The first of these proposed articles, "How Sankaracharyya Learnt Wisdom" appeared in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* on June 11, 1922. In this article which was published over his name Babu Moti Lal described how the soul of Sankaracharyya entered the corpse of a King with a view to learning and tasting the sweets of the world, how he forgot everything about his being an ascetic and how he was reminded of it only when the *Mohamudgara Slokas*, the first couplet of which means, "Life is as unsteady as a drop of water on a lotus leaf," were repeated to him.

His next article "Indian and European Yoga" appeared in the *Patrika* on the 15th of June. In this article he contrasted the European practice of *Yoga* or concentration which enabled them "to make discoveries in arts and science, the improvements of society and other matters relating to this world" with that of Indian or rather Hindu *Yoga* the "object of which was the union of the mind with the Great Principle which gives life to the Universe."

But who knew from before that the article on "Yoga" was to be Babu Moti Lal's last article in the *Amrita Bazar*

*Patrika* with which he was connected throughout his life, ever since it was started in 1868 till his death in 1922, first as a joint-founder, then as a joint-editor and joint-writer, then as chief editor and lastly as a contributor? Kalidās described the Kings of the Raghu family of old as—

শৈশবেহ্যন্তবিজ্ঞানাং যৌবনে বিষয়ৈষিণাং ।

বাল্যক্যে মুনিবৃত্তিনাং যোগেনাস্তে ততুতাজাং ।

The Raghus were persons who in their childhood devoted themselves to studies, in their youth enjoyed the things of the world, in their old age adopted an ascetic life and in the end left their body through "Yoga." It pleases our fancy to imagine that having seen glorious days in his time and spending some days as a recluse, Moti Lal ended his brilliant journalistic and literary career with his article on "Yoga."

The improvement in his health was like the sudden brightness of the flickering lamp that is about to be burnt down. He dictated these two articles and they must have caused him some strain. Any way, he was attacked with dysentery brought on probably by mental strain and had to give up the idea of contributing any more articles to the *Patrika*.

By the middle of the next month he was cured of dysentery under the treatment of Dr. Madan Mohan Datta and Kavirajes Jogindra Nath Sen and Gananath Sen, but he developed symptoms of dropsy and became very weak. He also seemed to suffer from asthma which had at one time been chronic with him, but the physicians diagnosed the case to be an aggravation of dyspepsia. On Sunday the 9th July he passed a very restless day and his breathing became so very difficult that the physicians considered his condition to be very critical. At about midnight on Sunday Dr. P. Nandy was called in and he found him somewhat quiet and apparently asleep. On Monday morning his condition had improved to some extent and the improvement was maintained throughout the day.

A note had appeared in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, the *Englishman* and some other papers on the condition of Babu Moti Lal's health on the 11th July, 1922. In spite of his weak health he would still insist on newspapers being read out to him and when he found the note concerning his health he dictated the following letter which was published in the Press on the 14th July, 1922.

TO THE EDITOR,

SIR,

In noticing the state of my health in your issue of the 11th July you have omitted one fact which I think it my duty to mention. I was not only under the treatment of the Doctors and Kavirajes mentioned by you but also under such distinguished medical men of the town as Sir Nil Ratan Sarkar, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Ray, Rai Bahadur Harinath Ghose and Dr. Prandhone Bose. I am specially obliged to Dr. Bidhan Chandra Ray who like others treated me several weeks not for money but for genuine love.

I had apparently a foretaste of the death agony, from which no one, prince or peasant, saint or sinner, can ever escape. It was terrible indeed, having to suffer from wind spasm, swelling in the body and want of sufficient breath and excruciating pain in the buttock and the back. The attending doctors with their best efforts could give me no relief. One matter was very vividly brought to my mind. It is how considerate and loving our good Father is. Howsoever the intensity of the grief may be it is accompanied by an amount of endurance which is inconceivable. As a matter of fact God had endowed man with a heart which is so elastic that it has the power of resisting any degree of misery which it may please Him to inflict. I could never dream that it would be possible for me to bear up the suffering which I sustained on the 9th instant and yet I did pass through the ordeal somehow or other. I may remark here that these sufferings are purely of typical character and last only for a short time. It has been scientifically established that there is absolutely no pain but positive pleasure when the real death takes place, that is to say when the soul separates from the body and goes up onward to its permanent home. I expect to have the experience of this new condition very shortly.

and what a pity I shall not be able to relate it for the benefit of humanity.

MOTI LAL GHOSE."

About this time the writer's father-in-law Babu Lalit Mohan Ghose, Advocate, of Bhagalpur came to see Moti Lal, who loved him very much. Moti Lal had great confidence in him and asked him to prepare his last Will, which he did. By virtue of this Will, Moti Lal bequeathed all his properties to his three grandsons Satya Gopal Dutt, Paramananda Dutt (the writer of this volume) and Atulananda Dutt, subject to a substantial monthly allowance for his wife Srimati Nistarini and his only daughter Srimati Sajal Nayana.

Up till now he had not been confined to bed. But gradually he grew very weak and by the middle of August the wind trouble in his stomach became very painful and made him prostrate and completely bed-ridden. On or about the 16th August his condition became decidedly worse. He got a sudden pneumonic attack and his heart became weak, though his brain was perfectly clear. From this time onwards he could not rise from his bed and almost daily a note regarding his condition was published in the *Patrika* and some other papers. For days together he was worse some day and better some day, till on August 28 his condition seemed to have greatly improved after his attack of Broncho Pneumonia ; his heart and lungs showed a decided improvement, though he was still extremely weak and prostrate. The daily bulletins regarding his health were stopped and everybody thought that he would be spared to the country for some time more. But on Monday the 4th September he began to sink from the noon and breathed his last on Tuesday the 5th September, 1922, at 11-35 A.M. surrounded by his near and dear ones singing the name of Hari.

From Moti Lal's letter published above it becomes clear that he had no fear of death, and as a matter of fact he was longing for it. He had no fear of death, because he had a firm faith in God. Such faith in God as Moti Lal had is



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scarcely to be found among men. When my father (Babu Nriitya Gopal Dutt) died on the 8th March, 1919 after suffering from a protracted illness my mother, grand-mother and brothers and sisters and myself were crying in sorrow, but Moti Lal who was in an adjoining room came to us and said calmly and in a dignified tone:—"Why do you weep? Is this an occasion for weeping? No, certainly not. Rather rejoice, for he has gone to the abode of bliss. (তোমরা আনন্দ কর, কারণ সে আনন্দধামে গিয়েছে)" His ideas seemed rather queer to me at that time; but since then with the growth of years and after mature deliberation I have come to realise that it was possible for him to say such a thing at such a time only because he had firm faith in God and His goodness.

Moti Lal had got only one daughter, my mother Sajal Nayana, and no son, and my father was thus more than a son to him. They were deeply attached to each other and when my father lived in Calcutta he lived mostly with Moti Lal. "He was a well-educated man, but what endeared him to all who came in contact with him was his sweet and pure character. As a husband and father he was dutiful and loving, and he was highly esteemed by his neighbours, friends and relations for his honourable dealings with them, so rare in these days," remarked Moti Lal on my father's death. His contact with Babu Moti Lal had made him a firm believer in modern spiritualism. He believed that there was life after death and men would soar higher and higher and approach God as they will be doing good deeds, but would have a downfall or remain stationary according as they did bad or indifferent deeds. He was a voracious reader and was very fond of History and English literature, but latterly he kept himself immersed in spiritual literature and spent his time mostly in reading, re-reading and digesting books on spiritualism. I need hardly say that this outlook on life was brought about by his association with Babu Moti Lal.

Although he was confined to bed for a pretty long time before his death he rarely uttered a word of complaint. A few days before he passed away when he was visited by a



relation of his, Dr. Sarasi Lal Sarkar, then Civil Surgeon of Khulna, and the latter remarked on his remarkable cheerfulness in spite of his visibly wasting away he thus unburthened his heart:—

“You see I have nothing to complain. I know I am dying by inches but I have attained to a tolerably good age. I have tasted the sweets of this world to the full. I have not consciously committed any sin. The place where I am going is full of bliss. Why should I not be happy?”

He had profound faith in the goodness of God and in the existence of a better world beyond. No wonder therefore that death had no terror for him.

When we were weeping on account of his death Moti Lal in his characteristic way said:—“Don’t weep for him. Rather rejoice, for, he has gone to a better world.” Moti Lal could say such a thing because death to Moti Lal did not mean total annihilation, but a change of environments for the soul, which is immortal. He believed in the doctrine of the *Geeta*:—

দেহিনোহ্মিন্ যথা দেহে কৌমারং যৌবনং জর।  
তথা দেহান্তরপ্রাপ্তি বীরন্তত্র ন মূহতি ।

Men, he believed, lived even after death—though it was not in this world. When a man dies in this world he is born in another world. Re-birth, he held, did not mean re-birth in this world but in another world. In this respect he was at one with the views of Dr. J. M. Peebles, a great Spiritualist and author of “Five Journeys Round the World,” and his illustrious brother Shishir Kumar, one of the pioneers of Spiritualism in this country. Re-birth according to this view means nothing but to be born in another world. Progress is the law in this world. A man who has got the experience of this world has no need to come back again. One who has not may come but why should one who has? The theory of re-birth in the sense of man being born over and over again in this world, according to the *Hindu Spiritual Magazine*, which was edited by Shishir Kumar and after his death by Moti Lal, was a relic of Buddhism.

The Vedas say that after death men grow in the spiritual world. There is not a word in the Vedas about re-birth in this world. And, therefore, the conductors of the *Spiritual Magazine* thought that subsequent mention of re-birth in many Hindu scriptures were interpolations in the light of Buddha's revelations.

During the latter days of his life Moti Lal came in touch with several spiritualists and became a great believer in spiritualism. The chief tenet of the spiritualists is that there is no such thing as death—the soul is immortal and it can never die but only undergoes certain changes of environment. The "I" of yesterday is the "I" of to-day and it will also be the "I" of to-morrow. This "I" will never die. I am immortal. What is ordinarily known as death is nothing but leaving this dirty carcase of ours for a world that is much more beautiful than this. We are like so many caterpillars feeding on leaves of trees, but, sooner or later we shall leave our dirty frame and shall be transformed into butterflies sucking honey from flower to flower. We are marching towards something which is better. Such optimism was Moti Lal's faith. Evil there is none, he used to say, we call it evil but viewed from the standpoint of God it is not evil. We possess a limited vision and therefore, we call it evil. We shall reach a position whence we shall find no evil but all good. This was his firm conviction.

With the younger generation coming in to help him in conducting the *Patrika* Moti Lal got some time and opportunity of reading books. Though he used to read almost all the daily papers yet the greater portion of his time was now spent in reading the books of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sir Oliver Lodge and other great spiritualists. He devoured their books and as days passed his conviction in spiritualism became firmer than before. Other books he read during this time were the poems of Vidyapati, Chandidas and other Vaishnava poets. "Chaitanya Charitamrita" and "Chaitanya-Mangal" were his favourites.

Babu Golap Chandra Sarkar Shastri, an eminent Vakil of the Calcutta High Court and author of a well-known book on Hindu Law, was one of those whom Moti Lal could claim as an intimate friend. But with Golap Babu he did not talk of politics or things of this world. They talked of religious and spiritual matters. Some time before Golap Shastri's death when they were talking about things of the other world and discussing the theory of spiritualism as propounded by Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, W. L. Stead and others, Moti Lal said to Golap Shastri, "Well, Golap Babu, you or I must die soon, for, both of us have grown old and infirm. So let there be a pact between us that whichever of us will die earlier will appear before the other after his death and communicate the things of the other world." Golap Babu readily agreed and since then whenever they met they reminded each other of the promise. Golap Shastri died in August, 1915. Since then I had enquired of Moti Lal as to whether he had got any communication from Golap Shastri after his death. On his answering in the negative I tried to dispute the modern Western theory of Spiritualism and the existence of spirit after death or their capability of holding communion with the living beings in the manner in which they have been reported to be doing by Oliver Lodge, Conan Doyle and others. But his faith in spiritualism was unshaken. He said that it was not that each and every spirit could materialise himself and appear before living human beings and speak with them. It was only those spirits who had cultured this art that could materialise themselves, no matter whether they were good or evil spirits. Great efforts are necessary on the part of a spirit, he said, to materialise himself or herself, and it was not all spirits who could succeed.

Though Moti Lal had been a life-long critic of the British administration in India he never entertained any ill feeling against any European in his personal capacity. I have more than once impressed this point on the reader. He did criticise Englishmen in their official capacity, but his writings never were against their persons. He criticised their opinions and

particular actions, but he never spoke ill of them in their private life. In this respect he did not spare the Indians also who did anything or spoke or wrote anything which he thought would go against his country. Thus his paper was a constant dread to the official tyrant, be he an Indian or an Englishman. And no Englishman can complain that he was criticised by Moti Lal simply by reason of his being an Englishman—he had no hatred for them.

On the contrary, he loved many, a good many of them with whom he had very friendly relations. Aye, even with strangers, irrespective of colour, caste or creed he behaved in such a loving way that it sometimes puzzled them. Once in course of conversation my brother Atulananda, his youngest grandson, who was then reading in the St. Xavier's College, told Moti Lal that one of his professors, named, Father C—— would often speak to them as to how to improve the political condition of their country. Moti Lal was very glad to hear it and though quite a stranger he wrote to Father C—— a letter concerning the education of his grandson. Amongst other things he wrote, "Above all teach my grandson to become not God-fearing but God-loving." The significance of writing this was that there was one class of religious teachers who inculcated into the minds of their disciples that God was a very terrible person before whom every man would be brought on the Dooms-day and who would like a severe Magistrate ask Christ if He knew them and accordingly dispense justice. But, no, said Moti Lal, God was not a severe magistrate. The relation that existed between God and Man was according to Moti Lal not like that between the Magistrate and the accused, but like that between the father and the son, or the husband and the wife. He has written :—

"God is of a very sweet nature, a very close relation of ours. His whole being is permeated with Love and He is jovial, fond of fun and flitting (রসিক, কোড়ুকপ্রিয় ও চঞ্চল). He is always near us, yet outside the range of our sight. But with a little effort we can catch him. If any one is able to paint this picture of our Lord in

his mind all his sorrow will vanish and he will float in a sea of joy."

"God is very kind.—He is *karuna mahasagar*,—an ocean of love, the dearest one to his devotee. He is sweet, very sweet and is like you or me." So said Moti Lal every now and then when he talked about God and the other world. He was a believer in a personal God. And though in his younger days he had been drawn by the glamorous tenets of Brahmoism as he grew in years the *Nirakar* Brahma (formless Infinite) lost all appeal for him. To him the *Nirakar* (formless) was a thing which it was not possible for any human being to grasp. According to him man is a limited being and it is, therefore, impossible for a man to understand the Infinite. We must take him as finite like ourselves if we are to understand him. In fact we must take him as an Ideal Man. Such was Krishna, such was Gouranga—God as well as Man.

Moti Lal believed that:—

"God is man *plus* something which marks Him out from the latter. This something is beyond the reach of man, for man can only conceive of one like himself and can never go beyond that. He may be described as the *all-pervading* Being, but the expression will convey no definite meaning to a man. This all-pervading God will still be a man to him. If, therefore, man tries to commune with God, he must commune with a God whom he can conceive—with a God who is *minus* that something which marks him out from men. So, if God appears before man or talks to him, He must be such as the latter can conceive—a God who can be described as only a Grand Man. But has God ever spoken to man face to face? The followers of Sri Gouranga contend that He has, in the person of Sri Gouranga."

And Moti Lal was a strong believer in the divinity of Sri Gouranga. There had been, he maintained, other incarnations of God, but they were only partial. Sri Krishna in the olden times and Sri Gouranga only a four hundred years ago were the full incarnations of God. In fact, Sri Gouranga, he said, was the *Purna Brahma Sanatan* (the complete and eternal Brahma) and why should we go back to the prehistoric ages when we can find Sri Gouranga within our easy reach.

I believe I am not disparaging Moti Lal when I say that his religion was not of the old orthodox type. As to image-worship he was quite indifferent—he was neither reverent nor irreverent towards the images, he viewed them with a spirit of toleration. But his love and admiration for Sri Gouranga verged on fanaticism and I have heard him discuss with a priest at Puri and saying, "Who would have worshipped your Jagannath had not our Sri Gouranga come here and worshipped him?" At Benares also he was rather indifferent to the numerous temples there and spent his time mostly in reading and writing and walking by the river Ganges.

I still remember a few words of advice that he gave me on one occasion. It was at Waltair in the year 1916. We were living in a house named Kendulavari bungalow just on the beach. It was past evening,—rather early hours of night fall—the full moon had just shown its face above the sea and a mild and pleasant breeze was blowing. Moti Lal asked me to sing some of his favourite songs. I sang with my whole heart and with all the skill that I could command. The night was still and the place was lonely. I was then a young man of eighteen summers only and my voice reverberated on the verandah facing the sea where I was singing. When I stopped Moti Lal said "I am very much pleased to hear you sing. I feel a great remorse that I have not been able to give you any religious or spiritual training because of my time being mostly devoted to writing editorials for the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. However I will tell you something in as few words as possible which you will do well to remember throughout your life. You may not appreciate them now, but you will do so as you advance in years. **Always remember and believe that God exists and that He is all-merciful.** If you simply have this faith you will never feel miserable in your life."

The words are simple and have been said by other men on many other occasions. But I do not know why often, especially when I am in some difficulty, my mind recalls the picture of my old grand father Moti Lal Ghose reclining on the deck-chair in the verandah of a house at Waltair speaking

to me solemnly and in an encouraging tone that "God exists and He is merciful." On many an occasion have those simple words instilled courage into my failing heart and given me strength to bear calamities with a placid mind.

There is a tone of pessimism in many of the articles of Babu Moti Lal and the charge has often been brought against him that he was very pessimistic, aye, sometimes even cynical. This is true in some respects. Numerous passages can be quoted from his writings to show that he was in the habit of seeing the dark side of things where if he had the eye of the youth he could easily have seen the brighter side. But this pessimistic nature is perhaps inherent in every critic. You can appreciate a thing, and also you can criticise it. A poisonous cobra!—how beautiful it is! You may be charmed to see its hood swinging to the tune of the juggler, and you may also be terrified to think of the poison that is in its bite. The high sea—it is so very charming on account of its possessing jewels and stones without any price, and yet it is so terrible on account of holding so many dangerous animals in its womb. Now, the optimist, whose business it is to appreciate, does not look to the dark side. He thinks whatever is is for the good. But the pessimist, the man whose business it is to criticise, is always quarrelling with his environments, he is never satisfied, he will always find some fault. Bring before him a beautiful picture he will say, "No, there are some defects in it." Sing before him a charming song, "No," says he, "the tune is wrong," and so forth and so on. It is true when the Government was concerned Moti Lal was not very hopeful about it and perhaps, I am right when I say that he did not believe in the least in the officials who were dipped in diplomacy, which is only another name for duplicity. Whatever an official said or did Moti Lal viewed it with suspicion.

Just as materialists pay scant courtesy to spirit or after-life, Moti Lal, a spiritualist to the very bone was also somewhat pessimistic about matter or earthly things. He did not see that earthly things had also their value and was thus very careless about them. Though the scriptures have described the

human<sup>1</sup> body as the temple of God he would refer to his body as "this dirty carcase", and would often show an eagerness to leave this for a better world. This may be due to his possessing a weak body on account of ill health or it may be due to his other-worldliness. As to the future—the next life, the life after death, not in this world as the doctrine of re-incarnation would hold, but in some other world which was decidedly better than this—he was very very optimistic. We are here grovelling in the mud, but after our death we shall soar higher and higher, according to our actions in this world. Those who love this world and worldly things will stay near about, those who do bad deeds will find it difficult to fly high ; those who love the other world and live in this world with their eyes constantly fixed on the other world and do noble works will find it easy to soar higher and higher. We shall find our dear relatives after our death and if we be good, along with our friends and relations who are good we shall march towards our Maker, our dearest of the dear, till at last we shall reach Him and spend our time in His presence in eternal bliss and beatitude. Such was his optimism—such was his faith in the future. Though his body was in this world his mind was on the other world and during the latter part of his days the major portion of his time was spent in the contemplation of his coming annihilation which would give him a new life. It was perhaps in one of these moments that he wrote a letter to the Press on the eve of his death, which is published in this chapter, in which he dwelt on the loving nature of God even when he was conscious that his death was drawing near.

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## CHAPTER LX.

### AS OTHERS SAW HIM

His Death, a Euthanasia—References by Public Bodies—Press opinion on his career—Observations by friends and admirers—Honoured by Public Associations.

Moti Lal Ghose breathed his last on Tuesday, the 5th September, 1922, at 11-35 A.M. at 2, Ananda Chatterji Lane, Calcutta, where he had spent about fifty years of his life. One of his desires which he had expressed on more than one occasion was that his near and dear ones should sing the name of God when he would be dying. His end was now apprehended every moment and hence his near and dear ones surrounded him and went on singing the name of Hari. In this state he died very peacefully. He closed his eyes and all who were present were struck at the smile that seemed to linger on his lips even after his soul had left his body. It was a euthanasia in the true sense of the term.

The news of his death soon spread throughout Calcutta and men, young and old, assembled at the *Patrika* office. His bier was covered with flowers and garlands from relatives, friends and admirers. The local Congress Committee sent a beautiful flowery present which was laid on his breast. The name of "Hari" (God) was written on his forehead with sandal paste and the bier was carried in procession to the Kashi Mitter Burning Ghat on the bank of the Ganges. The elite of Calcutta as well as men in the street assembled there to pay their last homage to the departed great. The obsequial ceremonies were performed by his eldest grandson Satya Gopal Dutt and in course of a couple of hours the mortal remains of Moti Lal Ghose were burnt to ashes, leaving a void in the country which can hardly be filled up.

Reference was made to the death of Babu Moti Lal Ghose at the meeting of the Calcutta Corporation on Wednesday, the



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6th September, and as a mark of respect to his memory the meeting of the Calcutta Corporation was unanimously adjourned. Sj. Bijoy Krishna Bose, Councillor, who moved the adjournment resolution paid a glowing tribute to Moti Lal. He was, he said, one of those who subscribed to Babu Moti Lal's politics. Mr. Rustomjee seconded the resolution. Rev. B. A. Nag, in supporting the resolution said that though he did not agree with Babu Moti Lal's political views, he held him in the highest esteem and he thought that it was only right that their meeting should be adjourned.

The next day all the newspapers came out with their remarks on the person and personality of the departed great.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* observed :—

"The Nestor of Indian journalism has passed away. He was the heart and soul of the *Patrika* and the sense of personal loss with which we are overwhelmed to-day will not allow us to do justice to his memory.

"Babu Moti Lal Ghose occupied a unique position among political leaders and journalists in India. The most mature in years among them he was looked upon as the maturest in judgment also. The most respected among the present day leaders, Mahatma Gandhi included, rendered unto him a degree of veneration which we doubt if it has been the lot of any political leader to enjoy. The foremost among Indian journalists looked upon him as their father and rendered unto him the homage of devoted sons. His position among his countrymen was that of the venerable patriarch of olden days. There are many among his countrymen who differed from him in political, religious and social questions. But there is none among them, we are sure, who did not hold him in high regard. His admirers are not confined to his countrymen only. There are and were many Europeans even among high officials who delighted in honouring him and were proud of his friendship. Yet Babu Moti Lal did not win their friendship by deserting his countrymen or injuring the interests of his country. He was always in opposition to the Government as Lord Carmichael once said. And it is a unique tribute to the personality of an Indian that he was held in high esteem even by those of whose policy he was a most uncompromising and persistent opponent.

"Sj. Moti Lal leaves behind him perhaps the longest and most brilliant record of public service. Yet, such service, great and unsurpassed as it is, does not wholly explain the unique position he held in the estimation of his countrymen and

Europeans. There was something in him beyond his achievements which attracted people towards him like a magnet and this was his heart. . . . . It may be truly said of him, as it can be said of very few men, that he received strangers and left them friends. . . . ."

The *New Empire*, an Anglo-Indian evening paper, now defunct, observed :—

"The death of Babu Moti Lal Ghose deprives India of one of her foremost political leaders and one of her veteran journalists. He was also one of those Indian leaders who are loved and respected by their countrymen irrespective of their political opinion. One need not agree to his political views but one could not fail to appreciate Moti Babu's unswerving loyalty and staunch devotion to the cause of his country according to his light and promoting it in the way in which he thought he could do it best. He was always firm and unostentatious and never forsook a cause which he regarded as just until he fought it to the finish.

"The economic and sanitary condition of his countrymen were the chief concern of his life. How he felt for his impoverished countrymen is well demonstrated by only one remark which he made from the depth of his heart in his interview with Mr. Nevinson. Mr. Nevinson asked Moti Babu if it was true that he wanted to drive the English out of India. Moti Babu replied, 'The English will be driven out of India in 20 years' time by the stench of the rotten corpses of my countrymen' . . . . . In spite of our sharp differences of opinion, we pay our homage to the memory of this great Bengalee."

The *Bengalee* wrote as follows :—

"We deeply regret to announce the death of Mr. Moti Lal Ghose undoubtedly the most veteran journalist of Bengal of this century. Moti Lal had all the instincts and equipment, the spirit of enterprise and native shrewdness of a great journalist, and was remarkably well posted with knowledge of public affairs and official secrets of all kinds. His fight with Sir Lepel Griffin was a memorable chapter in the history of Bengali journalism. He also fought equally strenuously with Lord Dufferin and Lord Lansdowne over many matters of momentous public interest....."

The *Indian Daily News* in course of a long editorial remarked :—

"Shishir Kumar, Moti Lal and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* were inseparably mixed up. They grew together, prospered together and suffered together. With the aid of the *Patrika* they fought many a political battle. The fighters are now gone leaving the instrument behind. And everybody will closely watch how it is wielded by those who have stepped in. Moti Lal was a great

Indian journalist and political leader and his countrymen owe it to themselves to go into mourning when his death has been announced."

The now defunct nationalist daily of Calcutta, the *Servant*, wrote a long leader on Moti Lal in course of which it observed :

"The passing away of Deshamanya Moti Lal Ghose from the scene of his early labours removes out of sight one of the most interesting and stalwart figures of the Indian National Renaissance. He was the last link connecting the old and the new in the National Evolution Movement. In fact he epitomised in his personality half a century's record of the fight for freedom and what was more he represented a spirit of ever-moving progression. He never went back; he was not of those who hummed and hawed and recanted. He was always in the vanguard of the free man, sounding the trumpet blast and keeping the lights burning with a shining, clear transparency. . . . . The life history of our Moti Babu is therefore really the history of the *Patrika*. The history of the *Patrika* is again the life history for half a century of a down-trodden nation struggling for freedom. Even to touch upon the salient features of it in an ordinary notice is an impossible task and we should rather not attempt it. . . . . To think of Moti Lal apart from the *Patrika* is a very difficult task. Yet what an infinitesimal portion of the Divine in him has found expression in the *Patrika*. No one who has not heard from his lips the exposition of the Divine Love, which is knocking at the heart of every one to find a lodging, will be able to realise it. He who had not seen his glowing face when talking of his country would not be able to appreciate what real patriotism means and stands for. Living the simple life of a true Vaishnava as the *Karta* of a large joint family he has vindicated the culture and traditions of his race—alas! lately at a discount.

"He who has not heard him sing the *Vaishnava Padabalis* has missed an education uplifting in itself. A great spiritualist himself, he never believed in death. With his indomitable faith we pray that though his mortal frame is no more, his spirit may abide with us for ever.

"May the face smiling through death when his last remains were being carried away in the bier with thousands of his mourning countrymen following him be proof positive that his blessings will be with us in the hour of our supreme struggle and a happy augury for the success of the cause which he held as dear and which he lived and died fighting for."

The *Englishman*, an Anglo-Indian daily of Calcutta, since defunct, wrote :—

"As a consequence of the death of Mr. Moti Lal Ghose a unique personality disappears from the Indian political world. . . . . During the greater part of his life Mr. Ghose was considered a very dangerous and sinister person by the European community, but the present is not the time in which one can enlarge on that side of his activities which so frequently brought him into collision with authority. What his worst enemies have to admit is that he was a man strangely gifted. One cannot achieve the tremendous reputation he obtained by merely sitting down to write scathing articles against the Government. Several thousands of people are doing it at the present moment and they are only numbered with the multitude. Perhaps the secret of Mr. Ghose's success is to be found in the courage he displayed not as against the Government, but against the other Indian political leaders when he believed they were going wrong. The rule amongst Indian leaders is always to support and encourage each other so that even when a man makes a bad break or comes forward with some preposterous proposal attempts are made to excuse and explain and modify. Moti Babu would not have this. If a leader were wrong in his opinion he wrote against him just as he would write against the Government and because he was the master of a very sarcastic style his criticisms were feared greatly by his own countrymen. We believe that it was chiefly due to Mr. Ghose's honesty of habit in this particular that he came in his later years to earn the respect of that very European community which he attacked so often and so bitterly . . . . ."

The *Statesman* wrote :—

"The death of Babu Moti Lal Ghose removes perhaps the most remarkable personality in Bengal. For more than half a century he carried on, through his paper the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, what was neither more nor less than a journalistic vendetta against the British Government and against the English race. No incident was too trivial to be pressed into the service of his propaganda or to be twisted into some real or fancied grievance. Yet Moti Lal Ghose had a warm corner in his heart for individual Britons even while he insisted on regarding the majority of their countrymen as vampires. He was in many ways a genial soul which if it had not been warped by a fanatical hatred of everything British might have done a great deal to promote a mutual understanding between the two races."

The *Young India* of Mahatma Gandhi wrote as follows :—

"A great spirit has thrown off its worn-out casement. Moti Babu brought truth, courage and love into our political thought

and democratised it. He will hold an honoured place in the history of Indian freedom. He was one of those great men whose ability is equalled by the beauty of soul, and who extorted not only the admiration but the affection of the people. It is this touch of the Krishna spirit that distinguishes men like Mahatmaji and Moti Babu from other great men. . . . ."

The *Bombay Chronicle* wrote:—

"A valued friend who had the privilege of personally knowing the deceased patriot, related to us a memorable conversation he had with Moti Lal during the special Congress Session of 1918. That was the last Congress Moti Lal attended and he had made up his mind on the subject. He was then in failing health and felt that the end was drawing near. But he attended the Congress, because it was meeting at a momentous juncture, and he cordially blessed the decision of the majority. He felt that for India to be self respecting and to possess a national status which would be beyond cavil, it was absolutely necessary that she should have self-government free from all humbug about it. He adhered to that view till the very last. It was a rainy evening when our friend drove with Moti Lal in his Taxi along Queen's Road in Bombay, and in the course of a rapid conversation asked Moti Lal the reason for Babu (now Sir) Surendra Nath Banerjee's sudden defection. Moti Lal's reply was prompt and unhesitating. "We (referring to himself and his brother of the *Bengalee*) are," he said, "both in our dotage, but my brother does not know it and thinks that he is still reflecting the true opinion of the country and presenting its true interests. I realise that dotage has already come on me and I have decided to retire from public life." On reaching his temporary residence, an inviting repast of fruit—Moti Lal had then ceased taking any solid food at right—lay on the table and while doing justice to it the conversation turned upon various matters, including the doings in the Subject Committee of the Congress and Moti Lal said that the reforms were a mere sop intended to 'deceive and divide' Indians and thus weaken their hands. His policy has come true. . . . ."

The *Behar Herald* observed:—

" . . . . Mr. Ghose was an unbending critic of the administration, but if it is true that the strongest critic is the best friend it must be acknowledged that the administration in India has lost its most valued well-wisher. Mr. Ghose's pen was always ready on behalf of the oppressed and Bihar has particular reason to be grateful to the *Patrika* for never having failed to take up any cause that needed encouragement or to expose any wrong or oppression that was telling upon her people."



In course of a long leading article the *Maharashtra* of Poona wrote :—

"In his death Nationalist Maharashtra has lost a sincere and never failing friend in Bengal. Few other Bengalee leaders could understand and appreciate the Maharashtra mind and Maharashtra character so accurately as Babu Moti Lal did. This appreciation on his part was the result of his close and continued friendship with Lokamanya Tilak extending over 20 long years. Every Maharashtra Nationalist who visited Calcutta was bound to call at the *Patrika* office and pay his respects to Babu Moti Lal and was sure to meet with kindly treatment and help. This unique connecting link between Maharashtra and Bengal is now lost and will be missed for a long time to come."

The *Leader* of Allahabad wrote as follows :—

"As a journalist he was for long a terror to the official hierarchy in Bengal and was the author of many journalistic coups, the most notable of which was the publication of certain official documents relating to Kashmir in Lord Curzon's time which created a great sensation. All the same he was respected by some of the highest officials in the land. Lord Curzon valued his opinions in spite of the *Patrika's* vigorous attacks on his policy. Lord Minto is said to have been so impressed by him that he had agreed to forward his scheme for the reversal of the partition of Bengal which was based on the Sindh system. Of the two men whom Lord Hardinge consulted when releasing the accused in the Khulna dacoity case Babu Moti Lal Ghose is said to have been one. It was at his instance that Lord Carmichael took up the sanitary and rural water supply question in Bengal and acknowledged the fact publicly at a conference held at Darjeeling in 1912. An orthodox Hindu Babu Moti Lal was a man of simple habits and closely stuck to Indian manners and customs. He was a devout Vaishnava and a follower of Shri Chaitanya."

Messages of sympathy poured in to the *Amtita Bazar Patrika* from far and near. I can mention but a few of them.

Professor T. L. Vaswani wrote :—

"India loses a veteran knight of freedom. Moti Lal Ghose dies bravely in honour's field and bequeaths to us a struggle, a faith, a hope. A soil impregnated with the martyred tears and ashes of men like Lokamanya Tilak and Babu Moti Lal Ghose is rich in promise of freedom's growth." (By wire).

Babu Hirendra Nath Datta, M.A., B.L., Solicitor, Calcutta High Court, who knew Moti Lal for more than thirty years, wrote :—

"I can truly say that the sordid business of politics was the

least part of him. This was only the surface current; but deep down in his nature there was the perennial flow of the under-current of a deep spirituality which greatly appealed to me. . . ."

Dr P. C. Roy wrote in the *Young India* :—

"The death of Moti Lal Ghose has left a void in the public life of Bengal which it will be difficult to fill up for a long time to come."

Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee at a meeting of the Indian Association observed :—

"His was a life of prolonged devotion to the interests of the country, and in the discharge of what he deemed to be his public duties he often incurred great personal risks and sacrifices. His courage, independence and ardent zeal to serve the country are qualities which he has left as a legacy to his countrymen and they must always inspire respect and admiration. . . . There were strong differences of opinion between him and myself. But all the same now that he is dead and gone and removed from the sphere of his activities we must render to his memory the homage which is due."

Babu Amvica Charan Mazumdar who was then known as the Grand Old Man of Faridpur, wrote as follows :—

"Lying in my sick-bed I have received the sad news of the death of Babu Moti Lal Ghose as a great shock. . . . The most prominent characteristic in his whole public career was his intense patriotic impulse which may have sometimes carried him to excess. But for all that he was a genuine and sincere patriot. His uncompromising attitude towards a bureaucratic rule and the piercing search light which he invariably brought to bear upon all dark spots in bureaucratic methods of administration made the *Patrika* at one time the terror of the Indian Civil Service. His quaint and caustic criticism of official high-handedness and the humorous vein in which he hurled his invectives against his opponents no doubt made him many enemies, particularly in the official circle but he never swerved an inch from what he considered to be his paramount duty to the country in exposing the vagaries of the administration. He may have sometimes gone beyond his mark, but he seldom missed his aim. Babu Moti Lal Ghose belonged to a generation which is fast vanishing in the void; but the void which has been created by his death is not likely to be soon filled up in the public life of Bengal. May his soul after a life's hard struggle for half a century in the cause of the country now rest in peace."

Srijut Aswini Kumar Dutt of Barisal wrote :—

"I have been feeling as one left without shelter since I heard the heart-rending news. This country holds not another like him.

..... Personally I can never forget the indication of his unceasing affection for me. He has been blessed in this world and the next by dint of his devotion to God and the Motherland; we pray that we may be privileged to follow in his footsteps. It will always remain a source of intense grief to me that confined to bed through illness I could not touch his feet with my head even for once at the last hour."

At a public meeting held at the Halliday Park, Calcutta Professor Nripendra Chandra Banerjee, then editor of the *Servant*, who presided, said :—

"The whole country from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas is in mourning at the death of the great Moti Lal Ghose. He was great both in heart and action. Undaunted at the frown of the powers that be, quite unconcerned at personal gain or loss Babu Moti Lal Ghose wielded his great pen with one object in view for the good of his countrymen, for the amelioration of the miseries of the country. . . ."

Pandit Lakshmi Prasad Garde, editor of *Bharat Mitra* said :—

"Babu Moti Lal Ghose did yeoman's service for his country at a time when the people knew nothing but to worship their rulers and the ruling race. He knew not what fear was. Selfishness was a thing foreign to his nature. Personal gain was an undreamt of thing in Babu Moti Lal. He always took up the cause of the oppressed, no matter whether he pleased or displeased the oppressors. He always sided with those that suffered and was always a friend of the poor. . . ."

A public meeting was held under the joint auspices of the Dacca People's Association, the Eastern Bengal Landholders' Association, the Dacca Municipality, the District Board, the District Moslem Association and the District Congress Committee in the Bar Library Hall of Dacca to express sorrow at the death of Babu Moti Lal Ghose. Babu Ananda Chandra Roy presided and Babu Priya Nath Sen moved a resolution placing on record the sense of the loss the country had suffered by Moti Lal's death.

Mr. N. Gupta, himself a journalist of no mean repute presided over a meeting of Bombay residents to express sorrow at Moti Lal's death. Mr. Gupta said :—

"Moti Lal believed his life to be a mission and his *sadhana* made him successful in life. . . . Moti Lal served his country

with a sincerity of purpose and he became a leader of men. He was the prophet of Indian unity. He it was who made the perturbed feelings in Hindusthan among different communities better and urged them to rightly feel that India was their motherland and that they were bound by fraternal bonds with each other. . . . .”

Mr. S. K. Ratcliffe, at one time the editor of the *Statesman* of Calcutta wrote a long article on Moti Lal in the columns of the *New Statesman* of London. Amongst other things he wrote :—

“Of how many writing men in the world, I wonder can it be said that they are known, by record and personality, to the entire body of their educated countrymen and to millions beyond the range of ‘education’? In England, certainly, (since the recent removal of a certain notorious editor) not one; and perhaps not one in any western country. But in India this phenomenon is possible and it has been realised in the person of the most singular editor it has ever been my fortune to know in the East or West: Babu (no one ever called him Mister) Moti Lal Ghose of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta. The mail of last week brought news of his death at the age of seventy seven. An epoch in Indian journalism comes to a close with him. . . . . He had made for himself a unique position. The whole of India knew his name. . . . . His editorial office was in a large Hindu family house in the Northern quarter of the City. There, a dozen years ago, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald found him in ‘a place that might have been an Italian palace,’ but with decay speaking from every stone. What Mr. MacDonald did not remark was that in the printing house adjoining, the linotype machines were at work. This queer Bengali had installed them years before they were adopted by his English contemporaries in Calcutta.”

A large number of associations and public bodies in every part of India held meetings, passed condolence resolutions, closed their institutions for a day or otherwise showed their respect to the memory of the illustrious departed soul. Amongst them mention may be made of the following :—

Astanga Ayurveda College, Behala High School, Boys’ Training Cottage, Bangiya Kayastha Samaj, Boys’ Own Library and Youngmen’s Institute, Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, Bangabani Sammilani, Bengal Humanitarian Association, Chitta Ranjan National School, Calcutta University, Calcutta University Law College and Post Graduate Classes, Calcutta Literary Society, Calcutta Psychical Society, Darjipara Rashtriya Samiti, East Indian Railway Indian Labour Union, Employees’ Association,

Hatkholā Arat Samiti, Indian Orphanage and Rescue Home, Kalikata Vidyapith, Kapali Bāndhab Library, Khelat Chandra Institution, Mahakali Pathsalā for Girls, Maharaja Cassimbazar Polytechnic Institute, Moslem Youngmen's Association, National Educational Institute, Noakhali Sanmilāni, Oriental Seminary, Presidency College Students, Postal Club, Ram Mohan Library, Ram Krishna Library, Saraswati Institute, Shahnagar Institute, South Suburban College, Town School, Viswabharati Sanmilani, Vaidyasastra Pith, etc. of Calcutta;

The Bar Associations of 24-Parganas (Alipur), Sealdah, Bagerhat, Bogra, Bhola, Bhanga, Bongaon, Barisal, Berhampur, Burdwan, Dinajpur, Dacca, Feni, Jessore, Jamalpur, Kurigram, Karimganj, Krishnagar, Manikganj, Munshiganj, Meherpur, Mymensingh, Madaripur, Narail, Nilphamari, Purnea, Pirojpur, Pingna, Purulia, Sylhet, Tipperah, Bhagalpur, etc.;

The Congress Committees of Andanallur (Trichinopoly), Bombay Province, Bengal Province, Barabazar (Calcutta), Dera Ismail Khan (North West Frontier Province), Jhelum City (Punjab), Khagmaon Taluk (Berar), Utkal Province (Bihar and Orissa), Vizagapatam Town (Madras), etc.;

The public associations, viz., Bansberia Public Library (Hooghly), Bangiya Puran Parishat (Santipur), Bon-Hughly Library (Alambazar), Gobardhan Sangit and Sahitya Samaj (Salkia), Murshidabad Association (Berhampur), Midnapur Sahitya Parishat, National School (Midnapur), New Hindu Hostel Union (Sylhet), National Institution (Karimganj), Peoples' Association (Bhatpara), Rajshahi Association (Rajshahi), Vidyamandir (Hooghly), Victoria Club (Serampur), Youngmen's Association (Baidyabati), etc. of Bengal; the Bengalee Settlers' Association (Moradpur), National School (Darbhanga), Maharani Lakshminivati Saraswati Academy (Laheria Serai), etc. in Bihar and Orissa; the Town Club (Mandla), Central Provinces; Gandharba Vidyalaya, Maharashtra Mofat Vachanālaya (Poona), National Union, Rashtriya Vidyalaya, Tilak Swarajya Sangha etc. in Bombay; the Kalibari Sahitya Mandir (Ambala Cantt.), the Indian Association (Basein) in Rangoon.

It will thus be seen that people of all shades of opinion throughout India had a soft corner in their heart for Babu Moti Lal Ghose. And why? Because they knew that Moti Lal Ghose lived not for himself but for the sake of his country; he had nothing to enjoy in this life but his life was wholly dedicated to the service of his Motherland.

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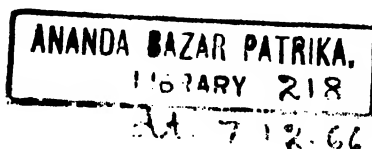
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